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THE SAVAGE LIFE.

THE SAVAGE LIFE

A SECOND SERIES OF "CAMP NOTES."

BY

FREDERICK BOYLE.

AUTHOR OF "CAMP NOTES," "A RIDE ACROSS A CONTINENT," "ADVENTURES IN BORNEO."

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Dedication.

TO

JOSEPH MAYER, F.S.A.

From your house, my dear Mr. Mayer, I have started on all my later expeditions; and, in your house, after a safe return, I have noted my experiences. To no one could I so appropriately and so gratefully dedicate this book.

For those who only know you by repute, it will seem a choice of all the most unfitting, which links with Savage Life your name—so familiar among students of art and archaic learning. And yet, amidst your many benefactions, not a few have been allotted to the exploring of barbarous lands, and at this moment your ready aid—and yours alone, I believe—is helping on an undertaking which should have been wholly national.

Were these stories fiction, I should not have ventured to put them under your *numen*. Some have been changed in characters, locality, or other detail; for one cannot always tell a fact in its plain reality. But I may conscientiously declare that no tale in the collection is without its solid foundation of truth.

FREDERICK BOYLE.

North Lodge, Addiscombe,
September, 1876.

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THE SAVAGE LIFE.

THE DIAMOND FIELDS OF SOUTH AFRICA.

I AM told, indeed I know, that some English people, not ill-informed upon "general subjects," are still unbelievers in the Diamond Fields of the Cape. To one fresh from the spot, who bears yet in mind the marvels of New Rush diggings, of Dutoitspan Camp, of the abandoned workings of Klipdrift and Pniel, it seems incredible that any still should doubt. Yet more incomprehensible must their disbelief appear to this or that unfortunate who has tried to sell his ancestral diamonds within the last twelve months, and who has heard with indignation the jeweller's careless offer—fifty per cent. below prime cost, workmanship not included. But, as returning diggers are few in number, and those who test the market by experiment are not apt to tell their doleful story, the public is still very ignorant as to what we have done and found out yonder. Ninety-nine in a hundred, even among those who know

somewhat of the matter, are unconscious—blissfully, it may be said, if they own diamonds—of the entire truth. I propose to set forth here the true but incredible story of our South African diggings.

The finding of diamonds along the Vaal River is only a re-discovery. I am informed that an old Dutch mission map, preserved in the library of the Chamber of Commerce at Port Elizabeth, records an early knowledge of them. "*Hier be diamanten*" is written across the territory we now call Griqualand West. Two hundred years ago, in a folio published at London, 1657, Van Riebeek mentioned diamonds as found near the rich city Momotopata. He says that the stones brought from thence sparkled like stars in a night sky. Of this historical, yet most mysterious city, the ruins appear to have been just discovered by our "digging prospectors," below Bloemhof, in the lands of the Coranna chieftain, Monkoran, some fifty miles from Pniel. Casts of column, sculpture, and frieze from thence, described as beautiful, have already reached Cape Town, but since my departure.

It appears that Van Riebeek made some attempt to turn his explorations into profit, but they failed. The facts he had acquired, however, long dwelt in Cape Town memories. Ancient inhabitants relate that in the old Dutch days of sovereignty, an expedition towards the diamond country was projected from time to time. Gems sometimes travelled southwards from hand to hand. But Cape Colony in those days was very thinly peopled. The curious law called "Homestead" enacted that each farm occupied should be circular, and should enclose three thousand *morgen*, about six thousand acres, *around* the farm house, which must always be the central point. The

object of this law was to prevent, as far as possible, the assembly of men together in towns or villages. It will be seen that it also discouraged combinations of all sorts. Men could not meet to arrange exploring expeditions when each house stood two miles from its nearest neighbour. The people of Cape Town had too much business on hand, in those days of Indiamen and war, seriously to think of such attempts. And, besides, the diamond country was haunted by the dreaded Bushmen or Bosjesmen, and kindred tribes, whose poisoned arrows flew unseen by night against every intruder. So it came about that people talked from time to time, and made a nine-days' wonder of some solitary gem that passed slowly down to Cape Town ; but no more. And meanwhile, the wicked Bosjesmen, as their descendants tell us now, were using the precious pebbles to bore their implements of stone. For Momotopata, from whatever cause, had already vanished beneath the sand.

I am not going to tell, indeed I don't know in detail, the train of circumstances which disturbed the ancient order of Dutch society in South Africa after its separation from the mother country. Suffice it that the *boer* population bitterly resented their conquest by England. From an early period they began to move from their homes around the capital. But the English rule pursued. Further and further they *treked* in the patriarchal waggon, driving flocks and herds, even poultry, before them, up towards the north and freedom. They found a way across the Karroo desert, across the Gouph, and to the fertile plains beyond. But wherever a settlement of farms took place, thither came the hated English magistrate. So, in excursions continually prolonged, the country became

familiar, and every child acquired a wandering habit and a stolid indifference to peril. At length, in 1835-6, the "philanthropy" of the English Government, which would not allow the *boers* to protect themselves nor would itself protect them, against Kaffir murderers, drove these poor farmers to a national exodus; and no man now is found who will deny they had great wrong. The Government of Cape Colony did not claim even theoretical authority beyond the Orange River, and this mighty stream the emigrants crossed, thousands of them, with wives and children, flocks and waggons, most painfully, into the Griqua and Bushman land beyond. So the future Diamond Fields were peopled after a scanty fashion.

But these brave *voortrekers* (foretrackers) were much the reverse of scientific. Poor farmers they were, who had never seen a diamond in their lives, and never had heard of one save when the gudewife read the Bible to them of a night. So the great discovery was not to take place yet. Wars came upon them; wars with the English, in which they gained the far-famed battle of Boomplattes, but could not stop the red-coats for a day with the logical demonstration of their victory; war with the Basuto Kaffirs; endless wars with Bushman and Koranna. They were re-annexed to Cape Colony in 1848, and restored to independence in 1854, when it was found by canny Cape Town that "the Territory" did not pay. I do not go into any of this history, nor do I mean to hint that the people of the future Free State ever obtained an equitable title to the Diamond Fields; for, on the contrary, I convinced myself upon the spot that our claim to them is just, as inheritors of the Griqua chieftain Waterboer. I would but briefly show how this land of which I write was peopled, and how

the presence of diamonds there, formerly well known, came to drop from men's memories.

For drop it did. Old gentlemen rubbed their heads and puzzled, when, in 1867, an ostrich-hunter named O'Reilly trotted into Graham's Town, and invited the opinion of a geologist there, Dr. Atherstone, upon the matter of a pebble brought from the Orange River. Dr. Atherstone pronounced it to be a diamond, without the least hesitation. O'Reilly, rejoicing, trotted away to Cape Town, where he sold his prize to the governor, Sir Philip Wodehouse, for £500. It is a stone of great beauty, but his excellency paid a full price for it. The weight is $20\frac{3}{16}$ carats, and as this figure gives to the ordinary reader no idea at all of size, I may mention that a diamond of such a weight ought to measure nearly three quarters of an inch by a half-inch, if well crystallised, as the Wodehouse gem is reported to be. We usually calculate that a stone is reduced by one-half its weight in cutting; but a flaw which appears scarcely visible may materially alter this estimate, of course. I had a stone of 40½ carats, which cut only 11¼; and I had another of 15 carats which turned out 6½; yet a third of 8½, which was reduced to 2½. But for that very rough average in which alone one can deal with such delicate things as precious stones, it may be said that diamonds lose about one-half in cutting. The first discovered, therefore, of South African gems may be supposed a 10-carat brilliant; that is, about the size of a man's thumb-nail.

It was found in this wise. About twenty miles from Hope Town is a solitary farm, inhabited by a *boer* named Jacobs. His cottage stands upon the bank of the Orange River. I have visited it, and can pronounce the spot to be

as dreary as will anywhere be seen. People in England naturally form their ideal of the Cape pasture lands by those green meadows to which we are so used. An ugly awakening it is for the emigrant who has indulged this vision. In the western province of the colony green is an unknown colour. All shades, varieties, and tints of grey our plains exhibit, but of verdure not a tone. There is no brook in all the country. Rivers there are, a half-dozen, perhaps, but all of them are liable to dry up. Even the mighty Orange, rolling thirty feet deep in normal times, and filling a bed three hundred yards across, has been passed dry shod. I myself have stepped from stone to stone across the Vaal at Klipdrift, where it is a hundred yards wide in general. All the other rivers named upon a map are alternately dry beds and fearful torrents. There is no chance of English green in such a land. No trees will grow; rarely a bush is seen; and very often will be found a patch of several acres on which no living thing is rooted. Snow-white lies the ground, glittering with specks of mica and broken crystal. On such a bare hot sheet of limey sand stands Jacob's cottage, a dirty building of two rooms. Three hundred yards away, at the bottom of high mud cliffs, the Orange flows. Among the trees and shrubs that line its bank the farmer's children used to play, as in an oasis. They collected pebbles there for playthings, and many a fine onyx, agate, garnet, and peridot they brought up from the shingle; for there are no such lovely pebbles as in the beds of the Vaal and Orange. One night a certain Niekirk, half-trader, half-farmer, a handsome, sun-burnt, sturdy little man, demanded hospitality in the Jacobs' house, after the simple fashion of the land. The children were playing with their pebbles, and a dispute

arose touching one of supreme beauty, which shone and sparkled in the candle-light as never plaything shone before. Vrouw Jacobs interfered, confiscating the stone of contention. She and Niekirk turned it over and over in the light, making it shoot out flames. The trader said at length that it reminded him of those gems mentioned in the book of Revelation. As the words were uttered, O'Reilly, the ostrich-hunter, rode up to the door, seeking shelter. He also confessed the marvel of this stone. Time was of small importance to him; as well trot to Graham's Town as elsewhere. An agreement was drawn up by Niekirk, stipulating that the profit of the enterprise should be divided equally between Jacob's wife, O'Reilly, and himself. This signed, with earliest dawn the ostrich-hunter set out, and the end of the adventure I have already related.

The newspapers of Cape Colony are not distinguished for brilliancy or "go." Nor are they commonly impatient to spread news or enlighten the public. Rather it is their special aim to damage each other, after the fashion recorded by Mr. Dickens in commemorating the press of Eatanswill. The issue of O'Reilly's venture was noted, however, and some cut-and-dry editorials appeared. A few restless spirits *treked* towards the Vaal and Orange rivers. Utterly ignorant of the way to work, they toiled and sickened for months, absolutely without success. There was danger of the great discovery collapsing. For though diamonds continually turned up at Cape Town, they were stones bought from Kaffir or Koranna, *fetiches* or boring tools. So true is it that there is nothing new under the sun. English and American inventors are hard at work upon the new tunneling machine, whilst for countless ages, Hottentot and Bushman have been using diamonds just as our patentees

propose to use them. But, twelve months after the Hope-town or Wodehouse gem was found, a black shepherd, called Swartzboy, came wandering towards Hope Town with a glorious star of crystal in his hand. He offered it, as I am credibly informed, to several persons, at a price increasing with each refusal; the Hottentot in fact was sharp enough to guess the value of his prize by the hesitation of those to whom he offered it. By the time he reached Niekirk's farm—this same Niekirk, the father of diamond-digging—it had come to a matter of £400. Niekirk had proved himself no fool already. After glancing at the stone, he harnessed up, and drove to Hope Town, bearing Hottentot and diamond in his cart. It was certainly the greatest day our little capital will ever see, that on which Niekirk came trotting in, with Swartzboy and "the Star of South Africa" on the box-seat beside him. Within a very few moments of his arrival the bargain was struck. No need for any man who had once seen a diamond to hesitate in judging of that glorious gem. Swartzboy consented to take £200 in cash, and £200 in goods, which were paid him forthwith. Wild with joy, he sallied out into the byways, nor ceased to urge his mad career until not one farthing or one yard of cloth remained in his possession. All being spent, he lived awhile upon the *gobemouches* of the place, then vanished, and went under. Niekirk sold his purchase that same day for £12,000 cash. Therewith he bought a farm, in which he dwells unto this day, heedless of diamonds, diggers, and panics.

I will here finish the tale of our South African Star. It was found to weigh 83½ carats, and subsequently cut to a brilliant of 44½. The water of it is perfect, but the shape irregular; that is to say, it is a heart-shaped, not a square

stone. Messrs. Lilienfeld, of Hope Town, who were the envied of all inhabitants there, having obtained such a prize for £12,000, speedily discovered that they had paid an outside price. It lay eighteen months upon their hands, subject to charges for insurance, &c. After that time, it was sold to Messrs. Hunt and Roskell, of Bond Street, for a trifle over cost price—not sufficient margin to recoup Messrs. Lilienfeld their capital expended, leaving interest aside. Messrs. Hunt and Roskell had it cut, with the result above mentioned. They asked £30,000 for the brilliant, and long asked in vain. Finally, in the summer of 1872, Earl Dudley and Ward bought it, with others, to be set in a new tiara for his countess. I cannot tell, therefore, the exact sum at which it was valued to him.

When the Star of South Africa reached Cape Town a fever fit ran through the colony. Each boy who could carry a pick set forth for the northern plains; each clerk or shopman who could raise a five-pound note invested it in a diamond speculation. Half the young men in the colony set off, on foot, in cart, or in the slow, old, comfortable waggon, for the banks of the Vaal or Orange rivers. Half the old men patted their juniors on the back, and subscribed to fit them out—on a system of participation in the profit. In a very short time the quick young eyes at work discovered diamonds lying on the shingle at Pniel. A rush thither ensued. People gathered the surface pebbles on the Vaal bank, and sorted them. It was not till January, 1870, that my friend, Captain Rolleston, of Natal, demonstrated that gems might lie beneath the surface. He first "dug," and to him, with Niekirk, should be given the honours of discovery.

Captain Rolleston's success caused another throb

throughout the colony. He passed through Cape Town in May, 1870, with a quarter of a pint of diamonds. They were all sizes, sorts, colours, and qualities ; but the Cape Town folks were troubled not a jot by such distinctions. They followed the hasty advice of Mr. Emanuel, recorded in his book on precious stones. How many poor fellows have been ruined by that luckless calculation! I do not mean to say, for I do not know, that Mr. Emanuel's formulas were wrong when published ; but they were probably designed to guide a buyer in estimating the value of one large stone. The Cape Town people, however, and poor Rolleston also, did not so understand it. These took the number of carats, classing the stones according to their inner lights, multiplied by so and so, squared and squared —and finally offered Rolleston £20,000 for his pile. My poor friend, however, had himself worked out a calculation on this same basis, which brought the total near to double that amount. The Cape Town offers were refused with scorn, and Rolleston bore his fruits to England. There, after hawking them about for months, he was glad to take £4,000. Shall I dwell a moment on this little tale? The moral is burnt in on Cape Town merchants. Some among the richest and most respected of their number have been ruined by diamond speculations. Not one in fifty but has heavily lost. Cape Town "went into" diamonds headlong—and scarce a man there knew a diamond by sight. The only knowledge extant was derived from Mr. Emanuel's book, one certainly not meant to guide the jewel merchant or speculator. Is it a wonder that Cape Town fingers were terribly burnt? Mr. Lilienfeld tells me that he refused £18,000 for the Star of South Africa on the day he bought it—an incident which shows the utter ignorance of both

sides, proposer and refuser. For all the marvellous flood of wealth poured into the colony, for all the briskness of business, for all the cent. per cent. profits of the diamond-field trade, there are great houses in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth which have scarcely yet recovered from the desperate straits to which they had been brought by stupid speculation in gems.

In this manner set in the rush of 1870 towards the Vaal and Orange rivers. Within a few months there was collected a population of 10,000 souls in an arid, colourless desert. The most profitable diggings were at Pniel, Klipdrift—which is just opposite to the former—Hebron, Gong-Gong, and Cawood's Hope. All these were discovered and worked within the first half of the year. It was by no means unpleasant, this river, or wet, digging. I have said that trees and flowers and grass and shrubs are found along the margin of the streams. They form, indeed, a mere belt of vegetation, twenty to a hundred yards wide, but broad enough for hundreds of gipsy tents. Our Cape colonists are a hardy race, unused to luxury in any form. To them and to their wives diamond-digging was a picnic. The scene itself, the swift broad river murmuring in front, the lofty trees, so thickly growing by the brink, the crowd of life, bird, beast, and reptile, in that narrow oasis—these things were a delightful novelty to eyes accustomed to the grey, long, rolling plains. And then, too, excitement for the first time made itself known to these simple folks. The most of them were fresh from a lonely farm, where strangers never came, where no new fact was ever heard, where none had aught to tell another. What bewildering novelty to such persons was the daily view of crowds of men, the daily sound of voices, the hourly suggestion of a world beyond

the next neighbour's farm, older than one can recollect, abounding in events and varieties for which is no *veldt* name! The colony complained that its towns were depopulated, that half the houses stood empty in field and street. I for my part only marvel that so many hung back, in those poor, thin villages of the south, whilst their neighbours were growing so pleasantly rich and wise on the banks of the northern stream.

Yes, it was a gay and charming occupation, this diamond-digging, at the first. English emigrants, even, used to all sorts of unnecessary comforts, would have found little for complaint. To dwell in a tent well shaded by trees is luxury in a South African summer. Only the monotonous and never-changing mutton, though it were less than a penny a pound, and the utter dearth of vegetables, gave cause to grumble. Colonials born did not see any inconvenience here, of course, having no other experience. Diamonds were tolerably abundant among the shingle. He who had not in memory the amazing jewel-pits of New Rush would say they were more than tolerably abundant. It is thought that about £300,000 worth was turned out from the river diggings during these years, 1869 and 1870. There were not more than 2,000 diggers, in all the camps, though I am quite willing to believe that the population amounted to 10,000 more. The average, therefore, would be £150 per man—a much larger sum in Cape Colony than here—perhaps three times as large—certainly twice. In the healthiest climate of the world, in work not too exhausting, in scenes lovelier than they had dreamt of, all were making money, and some, fortunes. For the sportsman, there were antelopes of a dozen species feeding within gunshot of his tent; porcupines, ant-bears, rattels,

jackals, hyænas, all burrowing around him; panthers not too far off, ostriches within a few hours' ride. To the fisherman, bull-heads of 100 lbs. weight, called *barba*, gave ample amusement. The digger with an interest in any natural science could pursue it in a new country, where his observations were sure to have value. And nine in ten made money while thus amusing themselves. It might have been predicted, from the well-known "contrariness of things," that this condition would not last.

At the river diggings diamonds are found amongst the pebbles of the bank. There are deep strata of such, often bound firmly together with lime, beneath the fertile ground. To dig them up, to carry them in buckets to the river, and there wash them in "cradles" of varied ingenuity, is the rough work of "wet diamond digging." The cradle has several bottoms of zinc, pierced with holes. Rocking to and fro, under a stream of water, the small stones drop through into one or other, according to size. When all the earth is washed away in mud the topmost box is emptied, after a glance that assures the digger there is no monstrous diamond among the stones. The next box, of smaller pebbles, is examined very much more carefully, for in it will be found any gem over twenty carats or so. This looked over and thrown away, the contents of the last box are poured into a bucket, and carried to the "sorting table." No more brilliant jewels in the world than that worthless gravel, of all colours and varieties of mottling, so carelessly spread upon the table. Cornelians of every hue, agates, onyx, more beautiful and more varied in their combinations than I could name, make up the bulk. In a "fair claim,' about one diamond will be found in every ten buckets, representing perhaps a day-and-a-half's work of all hands.

In some few claims an average of two diamonds a day was struck at Cawood's Hope; but in very, very many not a find per week, and in more still not one per fortnight.

The sorter's task is the most important. Other portions of the labour can be, and very often are, performed by Kaffirs or other blacks. It is not difficult to keep a check upon them, though one have not a man to oversee. If they turn up a due number of buckets it is plain they cannot be spending time in surreptitious "sorting" for themselves. The danger of a large stone in their hands, say fifty carat, or even twenty—one that cannot pass into the lowest box —is evident. But, in the first place, such monstrous stones are very rare in the wet diggings; and again, a Kaffir knows he may expect a larger sum from his *boss*, by way of reward, than he would be likely to get from the canteen keeper who receives such stolen goods. I do not think there is much robbing on the river. The sorter, however, has unlimited opportunities to steal, and he is therefore the chief of the gang, in general. His table is of plank, smoothed as closely as may be. Under the shade of an old umbrella he sits beside it, for the chequers of sunlight, now aflame among the glistening pebbles, now obstructed by the swaying leaves, would dazzle him. A bucket of "stuff" is poured upon the boards. The sorter grasps a "scrape" of iron, eight inches long perhaps, and three in breadth. With this he rakes towards him a double handful of the shingle, spreads it out flat, glances over it with an experienced eye, and rakes it off between his knees. The sorting seems to be done in one ceaseless motion, so quickly are the stones separated, examined, and cast aside; but I feel sure that an old hand rarely lets a diamond pass at the "wet digging," scarcely ever at the "dry." A piece

of iron hoop used to be the "scrape," even with the most prosperous, and it did as well as any patent things we now import. I have seen a 162-carat raked out with a bit of straightened hoop, and this was at the great, the incredible New Rush, whereof hereafter.

In these early times of the diamond-digging industry every day brought its romance. Each gem was greeted with a general shout, which passed from claim to claim from one end of the thicket to the other. It was expected that the camp should pay a visit of congratulation, and the finder hastily laid in a stock of drink, such as he could get. If the gem was a very large one, the lucky fellow often struck his tent and harnessed up his oxen, before announcing the great event. He then bought all the champagne (oh gods! what drink!) and all the beer in camp, and entertained his friends around the waggon. In these cases, we rarely heard how large the stone might be. It could be guessed only by the consumption of fluids and the expenditure of ammunition in firing salutes of joy. In the midst of the fun our friend vanished. Such sudden flights sometimes took place after dark, when there was no sleep till morning. Bonfires blazed about the claim, rifles went off each minute, songs resounded, drunken *boers* staggered against your tent, tripping amongst the "guys." If the lucky one owned no waggon he fled on horseback, buying a steed if steedless. Theft was most extremely rare upon the river, but there is an instinct of secrecy and distrust which shows itself in every man at the touch of great wealth suddenly acquired. He who was a gay and reckless spendthrift with small stones, turned to a suspicious niggard on the instant of discovering a twenty-carat; for a twenty-carat, in 1870, was a fortune to the class of men who

worked at the river diggings, whatever its quality. I have said that none of those who bought had the least experience of precious stones. Remember that this colony was the poorest and most hopeless of all English possessions. Mighty few diamonds were there in the country five years ago, even cut and mounted; but every man who could raise £5 went in for buying. Speculators bid against each other at the claim side. Fights even took place, whilst the digger, probably a stupid *boer*, looked on in equal wonder, bewilderment, and delight. There were indeed, almost from the earliest, men who knew what they were about. Mr. Unger, once a dealer in Scotch pearls, very well remembered in London and Amsterdam, had hastened to South Africa at the first news. There was my friend, Mr. Webb, now managing director of the London and South African Exploration Company, who had been ordered thither for the benefit of his health; and let me add, *par parenthèse*, with such advantage as to amaze the doctor who had counselled this expatriation. I am not aware of any other person at the Fields who could show the slightest evidence or presumption of knowledge. Mr. Webb, all by himself in the excitement, concluded either he must be mad or these speculators. Flaws were not considered, colour made little difference. A diamond was a diamond at Cape Town, worth so much per carat, squared by its weight, thus: a stone of ten carats, pronounced by some incomprehensible reasoning, we will say, to be worth £4 a carat: 10 × 10 = 100 × £4 = £400, the value of the stone. This would be a second-rate gem. One decently white they put at £8 to £10 per carat, bringing the ten-carat stone to £800 or £1,000; and sums were actually paid upon this basis.

Romance, as I have said, was rampant at the river.

Men then considered it a part of their business to "prospect," that is, look out new fields. One might naturally think that, since the diamonds were certainly washed down, and deposited by the current where they are found to lie, it would be no difficult task to predict the spot where they should be searched for: an eddy, a bend in the river, the tail of a shallow, &c. But it does not prove so. South African rivers, however voluminous, run through mere sand and clay, in which they cut cavernous channels. The toppling over of a cliff is a constant occurrence, the result of which is to divert the stream more or less. I would not willingly say much of the origin of diamonds, nor theorise on them in any way. We have laughed too heartily over Mr. Tobin, Mr. Dunn, Mr. Gregory, and Mr. Coster; over the wind theory, the ostrich theory, and the negative demonstration.* But it can scarcely be doubted that the flow of diamonds has now ceased, and they must be looked for, not in the present but in former beds of the river. We have nothing to guide us here in general. Former courses of the Vaal are marked over a quarter of a mile of ground. The only method of "prospecting" is to dig holes and see what comes of it. I think the greater number of diggings have been discovered by accident. A passing cart tears up a bush, and in its roots is seen a diamond. A wandering digger, pitching his tent-pole, unearths a diamond. Idling through a Sunday afternoon, upon a sheltered bank, another cuts a diamond from the turf with his sheath-knife. Even when the "field" is discovered there is no guide to the best

* Mr. Tobin, of the Polytechnic, suggested that ostriches picked up the diamonds and carried them to the *situs*. Mr. Dunn, mineralogist to the Cape Town Government, suggested that the wind had blown them to Bultfontein. Mr. Gregory, from London, denied their existence. Mr. Coster pronounced them not worth his attention.

claims. Cawood's Hope was discovered simultaneously by the nomenclator and another party prospecting side by side. They had dug three holes, and found in all. Notice was duly given to the Committee, and a choice of four claims each was allotted to the discoverers, as by rule appointed. They resolved to mark their claims on either side the middle hole, tossing up for choice. Cawood won, and chose, I think, the lower side. Whichever it was, he had the mortification of watching his rival make a rapid fortune, whilst he himself could barely pay expenses. I could tell many such instances did space permit.

Although the early diggers were an orderly and peaceful crew, some sort of government was soon found necessary. I have kept out of the political discussion and will not be inveigled into it. No force existed in the country to preserve order. There was, it may be said, no white population, scarcely even one of negroes. The various diggings lay under dispute, some between the Transvaal Republic and the native chief, Waterboer; some between the Free State and Waterboer. The great camp of Pniel, however, was under a claim, since disallowed, of the Berlin Mission Society, which professed to have bought some hundreds of miles thereabouts from Waterboer's father for £80, part cash, part goods. There was, of course, no power to uphold the *padres'* asserted rights, but our diggers proved eminently reasonable. They agreed, at first, to pay one half their finds to the landowner, but when the Australian contingent began to muster in force other views prevailed. The system of claim licenses was introduced, with an utter carelessness of the grave distinction between these and Australian diggings. Committees were elected by acclamation, and rules framed. The Berlin Missionaries

found themselves dignified after a sort into Crown landlords, by which change they gained honour perhaps, but certainly lost profit. Their land was portioned out in "claims" of thirty feet square, for which a license fee of five shillings was demanded by the Committee. Of the sum so collected, that amount reached the missionaries' hands which chanced to stand over when everybody and every claim was satisfied. In fact, beyond any doubt, great corruption reigned in the Committee.

The small camps which dotted either bank of the Vaal River, little lonely washings of ten or twenty or a hundred inhabitants, only knew President Parker. The General Committee, the Diggers' Mutual Defence Association, and other mighty bodies over which he presided, in those twin capitals of canvas, Klipdrift and Pniel, were unknown words to a thousand of our fellows. President Parker they knew, and him they willingly obeyed, for his police reached the loneliest camp, if need arose. Nor were they slow to find the guilty. Small regard to humanity they paid; suspicion was accounted much as proof; but in communities so simple common talk is rarely out. So it came to pass that Mr. Parker's authority was very real indeed. When the Transvaal President, Mr. Pretorius, came to see the wonders of Klipdrift, whereof he claimed, and had sold, indeed, the freehold, Parker received him with such formidable though unpretending state that Pretorius hastily withdrew. He ordered out a *commando*, or yeomanry force, to stop Parker's illegal sales of land; but the Diamond Fields President showed a front such that the *commando* halted before Hebron Camp, and returned ingloriously, after idling for a month around the spot. I have no doubt at all that if Parker had executed a *coup d'état* at this

moment, proclaiming the Diamond Fields Republic, he would have been supported by the mass of diggers. Thousands urged him to the act; he himself often talked of it publicly and privately. I do not believe that the English Government would have spent some millions sterling in vindicating its authority; Cape Town, of course, must have been "broke" before ever it paid the expense of sending 500 soldiers up through the deserts. But there always was found a depth of shrewd prudence and common sense in that good fellow Parker, if one sounded for it. Though he might talk nonsense, he kicked against no pricks. By hard work and judicious speculation his savings had grown very considerable indeed. He already contemplated that return to England which has since been happily accomplished, after dinners, receptions, and entertainments in the chief towns of the eastern province.* No wish had Mr. Parker to risk his fortune and his life by war with the Transvaal and the Free State, in which he might at any moment be left standing alone. So, when the English Government annexed the country, the ex-president was foremost in offering allegiance.

It only remains now to say a few words concerning the diamonds found in these river diggings. It is considered by my friend, Mr. Webb, that from 1868 to the end of 1870 not more than £300,000 worth were discovered. They ran small, as we now say, but yet there were more gems found over ten carats than were produced at the Brazils in twenty years. The quality was little inferior. In every

* With such honours was Mr. Parker received on passing through the colony to embark, that several newspapers gave him precedence of his Excellency Her Majesty's High Commissioner and Governor of Cape Colony, when the movements or names of the two chanced to come together.

digging known, large stones are apt to be "coloured" or "off-colour," and as we turned out so many of them our Cape diamonds early got a bad reputation. We are unfairly judged in this respect, especially as regards the river stones. Important interests combined to depreciate our success. Suffice it here, that the proportion of Cape diamonds *from the rivers* which could justly be described as "coloured" or "off-colour" was actually smaller than that from Brazil. The bulk of our finds were what we call small, five carats to the half of one, frosted and rounded with centuries of grinding midst the pebbles, having no "skin," rarely flawed (by comparison), and cutting white as glass. Be it remembered I speak of the river stones, not of those from the dry diggings.

Our story has come down to November, 1870. There are 5,000 tents at Pniel, 1,000 at Klipdrift. Five thousand more dot the river banks up and down. President Parker is a despotic monarch, threatening tar-and-feathers, the cat, and the "spread-eagle" to all disobedient subjects; nor threatening only. The roads from the colony are alive with hardy fellows tramping with laden carts and waggons. Sir H. Barkly, at Cape Town, is writing letters and protests to the Free State and the Transvaal presidents, claiming the Diamond territory. Mr. David Arnot, Waterboer's prime minister, in his study at Eskdale, is arranging evidence and weaving proof into proof of his patron's sovereign rights. Mr. Gregory and Mr. Coster begin to tremble for their reputation. Diamond merchants seriously talk of sending agents to South Africa. So it is in the month of November, 1870, on those ugly glowing plains around Pniel. And a whisper is just going round of a place called Dutoitspan, twenty-five miles from

the river, where children pick up diamonds by the pocketful. None receive this news but with a laugh. How can there be diamonds without a river? Such a thing was never heard of since the world began. But in a month's time it will make itself heard in such a mingled cry of amazement, delight, anxiety, and despair, as shall proclaim in fitting manner the greatest diamond-field that ever was—yes, greater than all diamond-fields that ever were, together.

MY ADVENTURES AT PNIEL.

It was late on a summer's afternoon that I first saw Pniel, the eldest of our South African diamond-diggings. Ten days and eleven nights we had been jolting up from Cape Town, packed like slaves in the Middle Passage, drenched with perspiration, our ankles swelled, a prey to flies and fleas and dust. In 250 hours of such travel, we had thrice enjoyed a brief luxury of bed: first at Ceres, for three-and-a-half hours; again at Schinderspan, seven hours; and again at Victoria West, five-and-a-half hours. Eight "square meals" had been offered us in ten days—two breakfasts, three dinners, and three suppers; the calls of appetite we had satisfied between-whiles with potted meat, sardines, *biltongue* or dried flesh, boer-bread, coffee, and miscellaneous articles. Two great mountain passes our lumbering waggon had climbed; five or six streams it had already crossed, and one mighty river, the Orange; two deserts also, the Karroo and the Gouph. Of perils and panics endured in 750 miles of such journeying I shall not speak, but of a truth the diamond-digger earns his reward.

The night was very hot, for November in Cape Colony is our English July. The sandy plain which overhangs Pniel wore a reddish glow. For miles we had seen the

great Vaal river barring our course, but of the far-famed camp no token met the gaze. At length, as the waggon jolted on, we saw the tops of trees upon the further bank of the stream, and then the rocks of Klipdrift, crowned with houses, of which the iron roofs shone red. Pniel itself lies under the steep hither bank, invisible until one gains the very edge. An earthquake in a crowded town could scarcely cause confusion more chaotic than is spread before the eye—a house stands here, a tent there, mounds and holes everywhere. Of the street designed when first the camp was "regulated," not more than forty yards remain. There is scarce room for Jardine's famous hostelry, a wooden building, roofed with corrugated iron. Hanging to the end of this is the canvas house of a certain doctor. Beyond, the roadway ends in a monstrous pit, sunk by enthusiastic diggers, and those who would reach the river must turn into footpaths right or left. The soil of Pniel is a deep red sand. Heaps and embankments of this lie on every side, as far as we can see from the elevation of our cart. Great boulders are regularly piled up, like fortifications, or lie in broken hills. On each few feet of level space—rare, indeed, are such building-sites—stands a ragged tent, or hut of branches. Blear-eyed men lounge full-length inside. Two hundred yards down the slope, between the crests of stony hillocks, between the trunks of lofty willow trees, the Vaal reappears. Long purple shadows fall from mound to mound; the dirty tents burn orange; the sky is all aflame; our river runs like blood. In the sublimest glory of an African sunset I take my first view of Pniel. Visions of fortune are in the eyes of all of us, as we leap from the waggon, and stretch our swollen limbs at the door of Jardine's Hotel.

The hotel, though full of humours, must be dismissed with a brief acknowledgment of many kindnesses from its host. It did not suit my purse to remain long under its roof: and by the third day I was owner of a small bell-tent, costing me £6 10*s.* at auction; a table and chair, £3; two picks, two spades, a sieve, a crowbar, two zinc buckets, four yards of rope, a gridiron, a stretcher, mattress and blanket, and a frying-pan, £4 5*s.* in all. There was likewise a "cradle," such as we use at the river-diggings, which I got cheap for £5; also a dog, purchased to defend the diamonds I was going to dig, but he ran away the same night. Total expenditure, £18 15*s.*; a reasonable outfit, but a serious demand upon a capital of £150. After some search, I found a space about fourteen feet square, not too far from the haunts of men. It had already borne several occupants, the ashes of whose extinct fires lay deep in the middle of it; what space, indeed, for half a mile around, but had borne a tent, in the great days, scarce four months ago, when 1,600 of them whitened the ruddy gorge, and 5,000 diggers reared those piles of stone, and dug those deep pitfalls? Upon the little platform I raised my canvas, assisted by a friendly Kaffir, man-of-all-work at a drinking-shop near by.

Thoughtful study of such information as could be obtained in Cape Town had determined me to risk my fortune in one of the deserted diggings, Pniel, or Gong-Gong, or Cawood's Hope. It was disputed at no hand that their wealth is not half extracted. The easier work, and the fabulous return of "dry" digging, had enticed thousands from these camps when in a fair way of winning fortune. I was resolved to make no such mistake. At the dry diggings, my £150 would be laughed to scorn;

at Pniel, judiciously expended, it should be the sure foundation of an independence. Such accounts of fever and misery came from New Rush and Dutoitspan as made even me, a very old campaigner, almost dread the thought of living there; Pniel offered me a river at my door, pleasant shade of trees, and a constant wind to fan the burning air. I was alone too; not over-strong in health. In those crowded treasure-pits across the *veldt*, life is too hard and too exciting, death too common, for the unfriended stranger to command notice when broken down; every other tent there could tell a tale of noble patience and self-sacrifice, but not exercised on behalf of the stranger. The digger's charity always begins, but too often ends, at home. For these reasons I had determined to stay by the river; heartily I wish that resolve had never been broken.

There was no difficulty then, in November, 1871, nor is there now, in securing a "claim" at Pniel. Over all the labyrinth there were scarcely a hundred men at work, where thousands had been jostling each other four months ago. But I was anxious to buy a proved "claim." The vagrant habits, the ignorance, and the constitutional distrust of the *boer* digger, frequently offered great chances to a man of ready wit. A *boer* gets tired of working; and besides, he cannot believe in diamonds, though daily selling them at a heavy price. This fancy for bits of bright stone is so very absurd that it can't last! But in the meantime life would have been pleasant on the river, if the leviathans of New Rush and "the Pan" would have left us Pniel folks in our contented poverty. They came swaggering across our *veldt* from their dusty pandemonia, riding thoroughbreds, or mounted in snowy carts bounding behind six horses. They swaggered at our

Jardine's in broadcloth coats, buckskins, and English top-boots, pushing us rightful owners into the corner amongst the miscellaneous objects of our Jardine's trade. They swaggered down to our river, stopping to point out to their swaggering friends some hole half filled, and to say: "That was my claim, boys. Haw, haw, haw! Didn't I sweat at building that dirty wall; curse every stone in it! And what d'ye think I found in the blank hole for six months' work? So many, and the biggest so much, and haw, haw!" "Can't think how these Pniel chaps get along," says another. Says a third: "They fish for a livelihood in their blessed river!" And so the party goes laughing down to bathe. Oh, the New Rush men maddened us sometimes with their rowdy boasting, and nightly uproars round the gambling-table. We were peaceful folk upon the diamond-fields in my time; but not once nor twice have I seen these fellows challenged to fight for no other cause than the insolence of their manner.

It will easily be believed that to keep one's head cool in such an atmosphere was difficult. I began to reproach myself with laziness, or want of luck, or over-caution. In this mood I crossed to Klipdrift, on the twelfth day of my residence. Klipdrift, though never very profitable as a digging, is the most substantial of all our camps. It has not less than twenty, maybe thirty houses of brick, some of them quite large. I have seen flowers growing at Klipdrift. But the population cannot exceed 500 souls. Though so inconveniently situated, for the broad and dangerous Vaal river divides it from the colony, and from all the other diggings, this camp has been selected by Cape Town wisdom as the metropolis of our new annexation. In November, 1871, the thriving little settlement had not

yet digested its astonishment and delight at this news. In the rough and rather disreputable canteen which stands on the cliff, a group of *boers* and diggers were arguing the merits of the Keate award, a subject on which both were equally ignorant, no doubt.

I paused to join the discussion. It matters little on what subject you begin a conversation yonder, the current and the end of it is surely diamonds. The group dispersed, and left me with the stalwart bar-keeper and one guest. This was a small, red, wiry man, sunburnt and weatherbeaten, puckered with wrinkles, blear-eyed, as a working digger should be. The sleeves of his flannel shirt were rolled up to the shoulder, displaying arms seamed and livid with the skin disease we call "river," or "Hebron boils." Of what colour once had been his hat of felt, his shirt, or his moleskin trousers, tucked into long boots, no man could tell, for they were stiff and coated with the red Pniel earth. A belt of canvas, garnished with many pockets, held at his back a butcher's knife. He sat upon the greasy bench, of home carpentry; and before him, on a board smoothed with dirt, stood the filthiest of all glasses, containing a turgid compound of *pontak* wine, "cape smoke," and home-made ginger-beer, called in our camp parlance a "pickaxe." This old sinner, with crafty face and hands deformed, seemed to be the very *doyen* of diggers.

We had not talked three minutes before he spotted me. "You're a new chum, I take it?" he said. And thereupon the old wretch began his incantations. I was too late in the field; all good claims were occupied. It was idle to expect the discovery of new fields. There couldn't be a diamond in South Africa outside of the present river-diggings, and the four dry camps, New Rush, Dutoitspan,

Old de Beer's, and Bultfontein. Hadn't every *kopje* for fifty miles round been prospected? Why he himself had spent hundreds of pounds in opening up a line from Pniel to the Mod river. Oh, I didn't trouble myself about new fields? Showed my sense there, anyhow. But what was a poor chap to do? He reckoned I hadn't over much money, or I'd have gone through to the dry diggings like other fools. Right I was to stop by the river. Claims were selling at New Rush £100 to £500 the foot-breadth, and that chap was done who bought at the lower price.

"Young man," exclaimed the wretch, opening his eyes and hands, "d'ye see me afore ye? Look at me. I'm the chap as prospected the New Rush—I did! Ask the *baas* there!—ask anyone you meet; they'll tell you it was old Jim Peebles prospected the New Rush. Look'ee here!" From a pocket of his dirty belt he pulled out a round tin box, designed to hold percussion-caps. It was three parts full of diamonds, which he poured from hand to hand in a dazzling cascade. "There ain't a many; I don't say there is. I sorted out double o' this at New Rush in a fortnight. But look at the quality—no dry-dug rubbish about that lot. River-stones, every one! Was it likely, having such a claim as them come from, I'd quit it for the New Rush? No, sir!"

And so on. No need to pursue the course of the swindle. It was excellently carried out. I was not so young as to run off at scent. More than a week passed before the word "sale" was mentioned, and then the proposition came from me. Most ingeniously arranged, and worthy a larger prize, was the evidence that accidentally turned up to convince me I had a real good thing in old Jim Peebles' claim. Jardine himself, the soul of honesty, told me—what was

quite true—that the man had made a fortune, colonially speaking, and had for some weeks been anxious to sell and retire. I cut the story short, for it is a sore one with me now. I finally bought the claim for £70, two-thirds of my remaining capital.

I could scarcely sleep that night, for thought of the prize so cleverly won. How much more prudent had been my course than that of my fellow-passengers, who had gone direct to the Eldorado. Six months hence I shall be following, with such a bag of gold as will enable me to buy a first-class claim—a claim where fortune is a certainty, where one may calculate on half-a-dozen gems per day. The money so earned I shall reinvest in diamonds, or other speculations. I shall make, as others do, cent. per cent. per month; and in two years' time I shall return to England, a comfortable man. So inspiriting were these reflections—not unreasonable, mind you, had the foundation been more sure—I leaped from my mattress in a fever of delight, and opened the tent door. It was a little after five. The sun already stood above the horizon, and the metal roofs of Klipdrift glittered above its trees. Of palest green was the sky, without a cloud upon its arch. The tall willows before me wore a golden glory on their heads, whilst their feet lay in misty shadow. Vapours curled upward from the river, in which a score of diggers were noisily plunging. Each tent and mound upon the higher land threw a long blue shadow beside it. Even whilst I watched, the golden aureole of the trees crept downward. The shadows shortened, shortened. The swiftly-flowing river began to sparkle. The green died out from the sky, changing to turquoise blue. A sun-ray

struck my face like a breath of flame ; and my first day of a digger's life was fairly in.

"*Baas!*" exclaimed a voice beside and below me. I looked down, and saw, squatted on his haunches, my friendly Kaffir. He was a Zulu, but taller than the average of his race. Black was he as the nigger of ancient romance, woolly headed, with large eyes, nose well shaped, but lips immense, shielding a marvellous row of teeth. No statue of a demigod has finer or more graceful limbs than had my "boy" Charles.

"You've bought claim, *baas*," says he ; "you want Kaffir for work. What you give Kaffir ?"

"Sixteen shillings a month," I said, "and the usual allowances."

"You no get free Kaffir for that," my Charles replied, shaking his head with emphasis.

"I can't afford more," I answered resolutely.

"No more ?"

"No more !"

"Then you got buy Kaffir ! How much you give buy Kaffir ?"

"A pound," I said, knowing that Charles meant I must employ an agent, who, for a certain premium, would procure me a Kaffir at my terms (N.B.—No questions asked). This business was largely in the hands of Zulus, who took advantage of each other, just as we white men did. But Charles laughed scornfully at my pound. I finally agreed to double the sum, on condition that the "boy" should be found by evening, and with a guarantee that he should be not less stout and healthy than my brawny Charles. Meanwhile, the two-pound premium was lodged with Jardine. All day

I pottered about my claim, which lay close to the river-bank. There was a great tree over it, which I longed to root up. I know there are diamonds under that tree ; but diggers' law is very strict in protecting timber, and I dared not violate it. The claim had been excellently worked, and its stones and boulders cleared away, or neatly built into a wall to support the mass of earth. My ground, of course, was thirty feet square, not more than half of it yet open. The deepest part might be eight feet below the surface. I took my pick, and gave a stroke or two, just to try what manner of work this might be. Within an inch of the floor, I struck a monstrous stone, which gave me two hours of the heaviest possible labour, in a heat super-tropical. But there is a wild excitement even in the fatigue of diamond-digging. It was with regret I left off, as evening approached.

At the door of my tent squatted Charles alone. "Where is my Kaffir ?" I shouted, whilst yet afar off, mad to think that another day should be lost.

"He come to-morrow morning faithful. Give me him pick and bucket. He be at work before *baas* out of bed."

I handed over the tools, plunged in the river, dined at Jardine's, and turned in at eight o'clock, to sleep as I had not slept for years. Earliest dawn found me awake, very stiff, but almost light-headed with expectation. I hastened to the claim, stopping only for a cup of coffee at the nearest canteen. There, plain enough, was a burly Kaffir, working with bar and pick. He looked up. It was Charles again —Charles wearing the broadest of Zulu grins.

"What's this ?" I asked angrily.

"Me your Kaffir, *baas*," says he ; "give me *briefje* to Mr. Jardine after breakfast, and he pay me £2 ?"

"Sold again," said I to myself. But never did I regret that investment, for my man was a treasure. By-the-bye, Charles was his Zulu name wofully abbreviated. Correctly pronounced, it was Chaw-aw-aw-les—five syllables at least—and signified, I believe, a white bull.

Very heartily we set to work at our claim, breaking up the lime-cemented mass of pebbles, and heaping them in the midst for washing. There is no mistake at all about the fact that diamond-digging on the river is as hard work as can be; but I have no space to dwell on these points. When a reasonable heap of pebbles and earth was dug out, we carried it in buckets to the cradle. What delightful moments has the sorter in the beginning, whilst excitement is still fresh! What lovely pebbles he collects, agates of all beautiful hues, carnelians, tourmalines, peridots, garnets, corundums of crystal. Hundreds of them, all wet and gleaming, under a South African sun, as no gems gleam, he puts aside, with a loving thought of girls, daughter, maybe, far away in chilly England; but the hard realities of this, as of other lives, come on him, and the bag is thrown away, some luckless night, as lumber. There are no such gems, to be mere pebbles, as the refuse of our wet diggings.

In this manner I worked with Charles. It took us four days to make a pile of "stuff" sufficient to justify a "sorting," for our claim was very full of boulders. On the fifth day we began to wash in the shadow of our tree. Whilst engaged with the very first washing, old Jim Peebles came to bid me good-bye. He was off to the colony, in his own waggon, with six span of superb oxen. I suppose old Jim Peebles had made not less than £10,000 in

eighteen months. He seemed much amused at the excitement under which I was working; but I only laughed at him, and rocked my cradle harder. I took out the top floor, piled with glistening agates, looked it over with superstitious care, and pitched it down the bank. Old Jim Peebles seemed yet more amused. I took out the second tray, filled with smaller stones.

"Come," said old Jim, pulling at his pipe, "it's a first-class claim for the river; but we ain't at New Rush. No fifty-carats in Pniel."

"No," I replied, with some difficulty in speaking; "but this tray would not let a five-carat slip through. And there's the proof!"—holding up a dull white marble, almost round, and scratched like ground grass.

"That!" he answered, taking it, whilst his red face turned dirty white; "that's no diamond!" and he pitched it down the slope.

I had not indeed thought it one! The gems I had mostly seen were "dry dug," clean in their angles, dazzling almost as cut brilliants. But by the old man's face I knew mine to be a diamond. I rushed after it, and he after me. I slipped amongst the shingle, and fell on my back. He passed, and bent down by my feet. There was not a moment to lose. Lying on my back, I kicked with all my force, and rolled him down to the water. He got up, bleeding and savage, but I was up before him. We glared at each other for an instant, and then he staggered off. But it was not till I called Charles, and set his Kaffir eyes to work for an hour, that I found my diamond. It was an eight-and-a-half-carat—a superb stone—and I sold it for £70.

That was the first and last gem I found at Pniel, though I worked the claim till the end of February. Old Jim Peebles had "jumped" it only a fortnight before, on the chance of selling to some greenhorn. I was the greenhorn.

A HAUNTED JUNGLE.

THERE are many strange ways of getting a livelihood, but the strangest I have personally observed was that pursued by two worthy fellows in Borneo during my time. They were bitter rivals in their profession, which, in point of fact, was walking-sticks. One might not easily believe that it would pay a London tradesman, however large his business, to send a traveller as far as Borneo for such trifles. But it does, or did, as I can testify. By an establishment of renown, with which most of my readers are acquainted, one of these queer fellows was commissioned. The other worked for his own hand, and therefore was the hate between them yet more bitter. Terrible to see the jealousy of W. when Timms "invented" the leaf of the areca palm, whereof umbrella handles are made even to this day. He did not rest until this feat was capped by the discovery of a new field of "penang lawyers," the cane supposed to be extinct a generation since.

Both of these men could tell us facts very interesting and curious, living as they did in the jungle, compelled by the very nature of their calling to have sharp eyes and to keep them open. With Mr. W. I had hardly any relations, but of his rival I saw much at various times, and upon one

occasion he told me the story I am about to set before you.

Timms, I believe, had been a sailor, had deserted in those pleasant, sunny wilds, and had followed all sorts of employment there. I met him once in a Dyak house, where we slept on either side the hearth-stones. Above and between us hung a mass of smoke-dried, sooty globes, which I glanced at during several days before discovering that they had once sat on human shoulders, had held human brains and blood. Before dawn each day Timms went out to seek his walking-sticks, dozed through the heat in some deep shadow of the forest, and came back at sun-down. One night, whilst we sat smoking, encircled by a group of naked Dyaks, whose stained teeth gleamed like opal in the firelight, whose smooth skins shone red, and brazen armlets glistened, I asked my comrade if he felt no fear of snakes or panthers while romantically dreaming in the shade.

"No!" said he; "I've been cruising up and down these Borneo woods a many years, and the only thing I've seen cause to be afeard of is Ujits and fever."

"Ujits?" I asked. "What are they?"

"Ah! just name that word to these good fellows round and see if they know." He said something in Dyak, and the men sprang to their feet with a cry, running to the weapons hung in deer-horn and huge tusks of boar, against the wall of their sleeping chambers. Timms laughed heartily and reassured them; but they looked grave on squatting round the hearth again.

"You see how they take a hint on that subject. Well, the mission folk may tell you Ujits is men, but those as know them call 'em devils. The rajah thinks, so he told

me, that they're the earliest people of this island, beat back by Dyaks and Malays. He says there's misshapen beasts of the same kidney in India, at the Cape, in Ceylon, and 'most everywhere. Seems as if Satan first peopled this earth, don't it? But, however, talking of your Ujits in partic'lar, they're found more or less over all the inland parts. There may be a drove or a family of 'em within sound of us at this blessed minute. If I was to tell these chaps so, they'd be out in the bush kerslap, an' their blessed beds wouldn't know 'em till the next moon. Ujits always track up come the new moon.

"You'll find some young officers in the rajah's service that don't put faith in those hop-o'-my-thumbs—they've said so to me! I hope sincerely that Scotch chap will never see sudden death at the same minute when he gets convinced of Ujits. Sir James Brooke, he knows about 'em, and so do all as has led a balla—a war party. They get confounded in the way on such occasions, do Ujits. Dyaks will go mostly anywhere if well led, but they won't go through a jungle where that track is seen. But it don't matter to your Scotch schoolboys! Why, there's some among 'em here will give the rajah hints in Malay grammar, and instruct me in the cutting of a walking-stick! Damn your Scotch schoolboys! . . . . About the Ujits? Well, as I've told you, they're imps! If you want to know more, I'll spin you a yarn. *Kasih sy' penang, tuah!*"

The smiling chief, vastly interested in the white man's mysterious talk, passed over his bronze box of *betel*. Timms mixed himself a quid of lime and penang and tobacco, rolled it in a pepper leaf, stuck the morsel in his mouth, and began:

"It was just after the great bust up of '57 that I first

met with the vermin. Whilst England was fighting her own mutineers in India, we had our little cry of 'Din' in this country. After a siege of six months, and a sharp assault, Sir James took Mukah and annexed it. The Kennowits and other tribes of the Batang Lupar had been aiding and abetting in that business. They'd murdered poor Fox and that fine fellow Steele, and of course they knew their reckoning was come. I'd travelled a deal through the Kennowit country, and the rajah asked me to go and look round there. I went, and what I did don't matter much. The Dyaks living round the Batang Lupar all turned out against the Kennowits, and every night there was villages burning in the jungle. It wasn't altogether safe for me to drop back, down the Batang Lupar, when my work was done. I'd have had to pass through the thick of the Kennowits, who were all a-buzzing and a-stinging like wasps. I thought I'd strike a line north by west, and come out on the Sakarran, where Mr. Johnson Brooke, the rajah mudah, was gathering his men to finish the affair. A track there was of some sort—so the Dyaks told me—but it hadn't been used since the troubles began, and there was a talk of Ujits in it. I wasn't quite such a fool as to disbelieve in them, or in any other possibility of the land, but when they told me nothing else need be feared, I chose that track rather than go down the river.

"A Chinese boy I had with me, one of the good sort, and a Kling I'd picked up on the Batang Lupar. How he'd got there the boy didn't seem to know, but he was crying with fright. As well take dromedaries into the jungle as such like, save only to carry and to cook your food. I wanted a Dyak lad, and never one offered. A man, of course, I'd not have asked, for the Ballas was out

everywhere, and every day there was heads lost and heads brought in. You might call it a three-cornered fight that was going on. These parts hadn't been half conquered, and there was no white man to keep the Dyaks in order. They knew me not to be an officer, and though they was kind and civil enough, they didn't tell me more of their plans than just as much as concerned the Kennowits. Ballas being once called out by the rajah, they went anywhere; against friends they'd a grudge with, or against the enemy, just as the whim took them. There was a sight more Dyaks killed by Dyaks than by Kennowits, until Mr. Johnson Brooke came up with his Sakarrans.

"What I want to show is that travelling was dangerous just then for a Dyak boy, let him go which way he liked. At last the Orang Kaya's old wife spoke up to me where I was staying: 'Take my lad Sayu,' says she. He was the apple of her eye, and I guessed she wanted to get the youth out of that devil's broth I'd stirred. The Orang Kaya and all of 'em were loath to let the young chief go before he'd taken one head, Kennowit or other; but the women here, as you see, have things mostly their own way, when they set their foot down. So Sayu was told off to me, and one day we started.

"That's a lonely track—right down lonely. There's not—or there wasn't then—a human footmark on it, after the first day out—not a hut nor a clearing. Ofttimes we'd have lost our way, if we hadn't had Sayu with us. That boy had never been the road before, but he lifted it like a hound. They're wonderful, these Dyaks! Seems like as if they had another sense. He just went on, his Kayan knife in hand, hacking through the boughs and clearing a way for us. Every now and again I'd see a stump, or an

old blaze on a tree that showed we were all right. The lad had an impediment in his speech, which was a pity. I couldn't make out a word he said, but A 1 he was in the jungle.

"Two days we went through young woods, and I saw, of course, there'd been people there enough not so many years before. My boy Ah Lin said they was old Chinese clearings, which is likely. All this part was grown like a garden by Chinamen, they say, at the beginning of the century. But the Sultans of Bruni, they turned jealous, and sot the Dyaks on them, and took their heads. Old Gasing wears ten pigtails on the sheath of his sabre. These he took fairly, in the Chinese rebellion, but his father had twenty-four, belonging to settlers he murdered.

"After ten days out we came to Campong jungle, and that lad could lift the trail at a run. It was just the blackest compong I ever trod—black earth underfoot, black trees, the very vines was black! Sunshine came through in dabs from such a height as made one's head turn dizzy to look up. No living thing was there, and scarce a bit of healthy green. Round the big tree roots, here and there, lay a growth of monkey cups, flat as on a tray, all side by side. Ferns swarmed in the hollows of the trunks. A beetle showed now and then, and now and then a little snake. Each fifteen minutes or so, a bird clanged out, like a church clock striking in the hot, hushed wood. It was dull travelling, but we went on cheerful, glad to be shut of them branches.

"Two days more like that! I'd food enough, and every ten minutes we found water—too much mostly. On the fifth day I half thought Sayu got uneasy. He wanted to say something, and I listened patient, be you sure. In

the jungle, when your Dyak makes a show to speak, hear him, or you'll rue it. But I could piece nothing out of his stammering, besides that he wanted to go back. He was beyond all danger of Kennowits, and I puzzled my head to think of aught else dangerous. As to the Ujits, I'd clean forgotten 'em! Another good march or two should bring us on the Sakarran. I thought it must be some birds calling, or the sight of a beetle with more legs than common, as alarmed him—what you call a homen. So I forced the boy on. But he went uneasy, and kept lagging.

"Well, we came to a brook. The jungle was still open, but of course there was thick-growing shrubs on either side, covering the bank. Sayu turned downright obstinate here, and wouldn't go ahead. After trying once more to find out what he meant, I served grog to all hands. The boy drank it, and his face got smoother, but he wouldn't step upon the little rotting branch that had been thrown across the creek years agone. Whilst I talked with him, Ah Lin, cockey with his nip, pushed past us laughing, and went over. The Kling followed, and so did I, after a minute. We crossed, and entered the hedge of reeds and scrub. Beyond, lay open forest, just such as we'd passed through. Ah Lin and the Kling being in front, I turned about to look for Sayu, who stood hesitating at the bridge-end. Just then I felt two or three light taps upon my helmet. One doesn't let a circumstance of that sort pass in the forest without notice. It may be a snake or a scorpion as has tumbled from above! With a swing of my arm I sent the helmet flying, quick as a thought. Just then I heard a low cry in front. My back was towards the boys. I turned, and them who was in the bush in front saw my white face. Then—— I couldn't describe it! There was a

rustling and a murmur round. Quick as a breeze the thing passed through the wood. I heerd soft, gentle sounds like sighing. I see' a dozen little atomies drop noiseless from above, steal from behind tree trunks, rise from the very earth, whispering. But for that low rustle it was deathly still. Oh! they glided from trunk to trunk, melting from sight in the vista—gray shadows, naked, about half the size of a human! Whispering and rustling they vanished, smooth as ghosts at dawn. Did I say the bush around was very black and still and shadowy? Ouf! I can't tell what that seemed like. The flesh upon me crept, my eyes stared, and the sweat poured off me. Those things were Ujits."

Timms made a pause here, and looked shuddering at the fire.

"It was all done in a moment. Before one could shoot, the last of those gray imps had slipped into the shadow. Then Ah Lin moaned and called me. I went, and found him standing with the cook-pots balanced on his head, looking at a scratch on his big yellow chest. I knew what had happened. I'd seen the things them devils carried in their hands. I took the pots off Ah Lin's head and laid 'em down. He sat himself by the track and looked at me pitiful.

"'This Chinaman go gone dead, tuan!' says he, quite quiet.

"I knew it well enough. Half-a-dozen scratches there were on him, each with its little drop of blood congealed upon the place. 'You make two?' asked poor Ah Lin, and I followed his eye. There was a tiny arrow sticking in my sleeve, but it hadn't grazed me. With a world of pains my poor boy drew the curst thing out.

"'This Chinaman go gone dead!' he said again, and smiled. Lord, sir, I cried over the boy as if he'd been my own. No more he spoke than just them words from time to time, till his eyes began to glaze, and he died smiling. Dropped from my arms he did without ever a quiver—dead in ten minutes.

"Only then I thought of the Kling. He hadn't spoke a word, but rolled himself in his *sarong* and died silent, with his head on his knees. They were as happy-looking corpses as ever lay on bier. And there I was, with the sunlight flickering down on 'em and the flies gathering round.

"I carried Ah Lin and the Kling into the brook, and covered them with rocks. Then I beat down the bank on them. And then—there I was! Sayu had gone! I picked up my helmet, and the pots them poor boys had been carrying. On a sudden the loneliness seized me, and I got frightened, ay, frightened so as the sweat poured off me, and I set my back agin a tree. Some men wouldn't own that, but I'm not 'shamed. All alone in the jungle, mark you!—but not alone, for them devilish dwarfs was round, looking at me, maybe, with their little hungry eyes, mocking. Great God, an' it was so still! The sun had dipped. Long streamers of light above began to burn red. Shadows was forming from tree to tree. I fancied I saw one devil gibbering at me from a black hollow. I watched. He levelled his accurst blow-pipe. I snatched my gun and shot! It sounded like thunder, muffled between walls. The leaves fell from above. A white patch showed where I had thought to see those eyes—it was but a wasp's old nest on the tree! The noise, and the stillness after, made my brain whirl with fright. I sat looking at the forward trail—the Ujits had gone that way!

"Well, sir, it's not known to me who invented brandy, but I, for one, have need to be grateful to him. An hour I'd sat there, trembling and sweating, when my eye caught sight of the bottle; I didn't dare go down to the brook for water. Taking it by the neck I drank till my throat was raw; when I put it down I was another man. It makes me laugh now to remember how quietly I got up and packed what food I had in a basket and set off. I just wanted to meet Ujits, no less. I guess I was drunk in a sense, but spirits takes you very differently one time and another. As cool as if going down London streets I went on. It may have been three o'clock or four, and before dark, without meeting a soul, I came to plantations and footmarks. Going quicker I reached a house, a Dyak house, where men and women lived. So I got out of that haunted jungle."

"The boys were killed with poisoned arrows?" I asked.

"Yes; sumpit arrows, just thorns of the sago palm, tipped with poison from the upas tree. Their long blow-pipes will carry such a thing eighty yards to kill a native man. It was my clothes and my helmet saved me. The Dyaks were in a dreadful fright when they heard of Ujits so close to them; it seems likely that the war and the confusion had driven them back. Hundreds of women and children followed me to Sakarran, where the men had assembled for the *balla*. Mr. Johnson Brooke had difficulty in keeping them under the flag when they knew there was danger at home. But he promised to hunt out these Ujits as soon as the big war should be done, and so they followed him."

"Did he do so?"

"Well, he tried. After over-running the Kennowit country his force returned, full of glory and plunder.

'Now,' says he, 'who's for fighting Ujits?' There wasn't a man answered; they concluded to let them wretches alone. But the Rajah Mudah wouldn't have it so. Since none of the forest Dyaks volunteered, he called on his Seribas men, and they answered gaily. The Seribas found their occupation gone now peace was restored, for they hadn't an idea of honest work at that time. Sixty young warriors set out—dancing and singing—from Sakarran fort. They thought so little of Ujits—knowing nothing of 'em, poor chaps!—that they didn't strip, as is usual when Dyaks go to war. They went out all glister and jangle, with gold bracelets and tinkling little bells and gold charms round their necks. The land Dyaks didn't know what to expect when Seribas men set to hunt Ujits, but they probably wished each might exterminate the other.

"Six weeks that expedition passed in the jungle. When it came back, them as were left of it, the men were skeletons, silly with fright, shaking at a leaf and scared with the wind. Out of sixty, thirty-four they left behind. It was a horrid tale they brought with them. For three weeks they went up and down the forest, seeking Ujits and finding none. Then, of a morning, round their camps, little footmarks began to show, winding all about so close to the sentries that a hand stretched out would have touched them. Disputes rose, for some accused others of sleeping, and two men were killed in duels. The Seribas got frightened, but they wouldn't own it. Then, one day, all the advance guard of fifteen men was scratched with sumpit arrows, and died where it stood. The others coming up found them lying still, with a speck of blood on every body, and not even footprints of the enemy. There was a panic. That same night all the sentries were picked off: they just

gave an alarm and died! Before daylight the Seribas broke up and ran, some losing the main body, and of them not one returned. Up to the very verge of the settled country they were pursued—a man falling here, another there. They reached Sakarran a mere rout, food and arms thrown away, wild with superstitious fear! Not one Ujit had they seen, but there are men amongst them as have never recovered that scare. Two lost their wits altogether. And the Seribas remember it so well that all the gold in Borneo would not tempt them to make another expedition against the Ujits.

"But there's boys in this country will tell you no such imps exist! The Lord save me from one plague and the other—from Scotch schoolboys and murdering Ujits! Good night, sir!"

ON THE SAN JOSÉ ROAD.

"FEW persons who can avoid the necessity visit Costa Rica. Perhaps they are wise in this. Nevertheless it is a great misfortune for that country.

"It is a misfortune because the rarity of strangers tends to confirm an idea deeply implanted in the Costa Rican mind, but considered by me to be erroneous—that their folks are the sole inhabitants of this earth, excepting such small wretches as drag out existence on the soil of the neighbouring republics.

"Society in Costa Rica pretends to enormous culture and vast liberty of thought. With an air of patronising encouragement it asks the amazed stranger whether he live on the London or Paris bank of the New York River. Nay, when very drunk indeed, society will quaver out sentiments of reckless infidelity in matters of religion, and, shuddering at its own sinful duplicity, will declare that some heretics may even be called Christians as a matter of politeness. For my own part I prefer the unaffected ignorance and the honest fanaticism of Nicaragua.

"Only two points can I see of good in this pretentious little state: their coffee and their road. For the rest the peons are churlish, and the rich are—what did Mr.

Thackeray call that class of persons which he particularly disliked ?

"There is but one amusement in Costa Rica—gambling. You may gamble with dice, with cards, with fruit stones, or with fighting-cocks. You must gamble somehow, or what on earth can be done with money—unless you choose to get drunk. For this amusement Government claims the monopoly, but it retails cheap. Consequently the population is about equally divided in its choice, and very many combine the two pleasures."

Laughingly I read these passages in trotting along the road alluded to. It is indeed a creditable work in that thriftless region; a work without a rival, without an imitation, between the frontier line of Mexico and the Isthmus of Panama. At the same time a highway board in England would certainly be indicted for neglect of duty if it left any country road in such a state. Macadamising is, of course, an unknown art in that quarter of the globe, but the merest common sense would suggest the advantage of removing roots eighteen inches high, of filling holes a foot deep, and of cutting down *some* of the trees which block the middle passage. Yet let us be just. If indeed it be found impossible to construct a road broader than twice the width of a bullock-cart, it is of course desirable to have some sort of barrier in the midst to prevent oxen from straying to their wrong side. But it might be urged again that the thorniest species of American bamboo is not altogether the best material for a hedgerow into which one is driven each instant by passing vehicles ; when we use bamboo in China and the East there is always a ditch intervening.

But such is the Pacific road, and I repeat that nothing

like it exists between Chiapas and Panama. It is neither a torrent, nor a precipice, nor a mudhole, nor the ridge of a stone wall, which are the usual routes in Central America. It is broad and smooth, except for roots and holes; two feet deep lies the dust, it's true, but that was of small weight with us after our weary tramp backwards and forwards from one gold-field to another. So we trotted along merrily towards Esparsa, under the shadow of vast trees hung with lianas, between hedges of lacelike bamboo. Being much better mounted than my companions, I threaded the crowd of bullock-carts, horsemen, and shouting children, at a pace they could not support, and towards sundown, when the "peons" were unyoking their oxen in long camps by the roadside, I found myself quite alone. I had a long, steep hill to climb before reaching Esparsa. The short twilight of the tropics settled down upon the hills; then soft mists began to rise, and the creatures of darkness to appear. Flat and large-winged and noiseless, like enormous butterflies, the night-hawks floated along the path, alighting in front of me. Weirdly and ghostlike they took wing again beneath her very hoofs, causing my mule to start backwards with a frightened snort. The great goatsuckers cackled hoarsely overhead as they circled round. Here or there a lonely firefly glinted among the boughs, flashing and waning. A gentle wind from the near Pacific sighed along the hills; all was still and dark and lonely upon the road, save in the sheltered hollows, where fires gleamed among the black trees, and long lines of coffee-carts were drawn up beside. It was startling to come suddenly from the darkness and silence into one of these camps, where all was bright and noisy and active. The women were singing or cooking, the men drinking or feeding their oxen, or mending

harness. Through them all I trotted on, up the long hillside.

Crowning the summit was a small house, or rather shanty, such as line the whole road from Punt' Arenas to San José; a public-house where the luxurious traveller can order Bass or Allsopp—it depends on circumstances whether he get it or no—and the thirsty "peon" can imbibe just so much as he may please of the Government monopoly at the price of a dime a drink!

I was hesitating whether to wait here, or to press on to Esparsa. The shed was full of brawny Costa Ricans, white-skinned and thick-bearded, and the false tones of their voice and laughter showed that the Government had profited considerably already. In a hollow by the roadside stood the loaded carts, with fires already lighted between them, and the stately oxen munched their sugar-cane behind. While I hesitated, a wild American oath rang out above the confusion, the "peons" were scattered from the doorway, and a tall fellow, in coloured shirt and high boots, ran up to me.

"You come 'long in here, mister! We've been a-lookin' for a Christian to drink with this two hours. Now don't you think to say no! Them noes don't smell nice. If you was the President himself, you should stop an' take a drink!"

I looked at the speaker as closely as the red firelight would permit. He was very tall and broad-shouldered, upright, bearded, and lithe-looking. His face, hairless on the cheeks, was sallow and dry, mouth firm, and his dark eyes sparkled with reckless spirit. It was a type such as is never seen in Europe, but commonly enough in Texas and Missouri—the type of a wild Bohemian, to whom life, his own

or another's, is of no more value than a charge of powder. I recognised him at once.

"Now, Jem," I answered, "it's no good! I've spent all my plunder, and I'm going to crack 'huacas' on the Chiriqui. You can't get a cent out of my belt, and that being so, I'll drink with you as long as you'll keep it going. Who's your mate?" I added, dismounting.

"Great thunder! Why it's J——! What, in the etarnal world, has brought you to huaca-cracking? When I left La Vergen, they said you was sweating bullion on the Mico."

"Did they?" I answered. "Then they took advantage of your trustful disposition, Jem. If I may give a hint to a Texan boy, I'd recommend you to handle these Costa Rican peons a little more gently, or you'll lose your beauty pretty soon. They're not Nicaraguans, you know."

"Aren't they? They're cusses just about as mean then. I shall treat 'em much as I dam please, I guess. How goes the game, boy?"

"Dropping on every card, by thunder!" growled his mate.

The shanty was crammed. Four thin candles, with long wicks, lit up as great a variety of savage faces as ever I saw in the worst "faro-hell" of California. From the dark half-breed, and insolent-looking mulatto, to the yellow-haired Spaniard of blood unmixed, every variety of colour was represented in the crowd of gamblers. The "gandin" was there, uncomfortably grand in a chimney-pot hat and coat of broadcloth; the trader, in fringed Guatemalan jacket; the stalwart "peon," with broad Panama hat, and loose drawers rolled above the knee. All passers-by had been magnetically drawn into that little shed, and some, I

found, had passed the day there. Such wretched furniture as the place could boast had been carried away, except one table and the stool. The padrone and his wife sat cross-legged on the counter, keeping within their reach the square bottles of "Ginevra," and the long-necked flasks of "aguardiente." Beside them dozed a boy, wearied out with long attendance and exposure to the sun through the open front. The air was thick and hazy with smoke and liquor fumes, which rolled out into the black night in volumes. Floor there was none, but the ground was strewn with empty bottles and fragments of cigars. The heat was terrible. But all faces were drawn and fixed and feverish ; the curses rolled up to heaven in an unbroken stream. Como no ? These Costa Ricans were enjoying the national game in a national manner.

At the table, to which Jem rudely crushed his way, an old man sat, supported on either side by a ruffianly fellow armed with machete and knife—as, indeed, were five-sixths of the company. Upon the board lay four cards, surrounded by little piles of gold and silver. He was not ill-looking, that old man, though the big spectacles, cased in tortoise-shell, did not well set off his eyes ; slow-moving and silent was he, like most gamblers of profession. He glanced up sharply as Jem pushed forward, and his eyes fixed themselves upon me curiously, but he recognised in an instant the digger down on his luck, and, bowing slightly, bent over the cards again. The bank was in a golden vein ; when stakes were high the old man always turned a winning card ; when low he lost. From the passionate cries on every side I found that the play had been so running all day ; many of the peons were utterly broken, but not the less did they continue to take interest in the game. Jem

Whately and his friend, who were also "sportsmen," or professional gamblers, had lost heavily, and a savage look was gathering in the face of either. "Look at those Yankee mules," whispered a Costa Rican beside me; "there will be mischief soon, and murder likely enough, Let us get out!" I knew that course was wisest, yet I stayed. And the mad oaths rang out more savagely in the soddened air; the threatening glare in the sportsmen's eyes grew more eager; and still the bottles of aguardiente were passed round at the banker's expense.

A little wizened man, who had lost very heavily, attracted my eye by his peering, excited movements. Placing three ounces of gold upon the table, he leaned forward with intense eagerness to mark the turning of the cards. "Do you watch the hatch of your chickens as close, senor?" asked one of the grim guardians of the bank, with an unpleasant smile. The old man calmly turned the card, and the three ounces were lost. A ghastly sort of chuckle escaped the dwarf's lips. Then his feverish eyes peered round the table. They rested upon me for a moment, then upon Whately and his mate. The little misshapen wretch began edging through the crowd towards us.

"That's the last cent we own in this world," muttered Jem to himself. "Great thunder! What a run of luck! Seems to have struck 'considerable ile' to-night, that old cuss! We must take to 'huaca-cracking' with J—— here, Sim! that will be our game for the next month or so. I'd like to have a 'muss' for the dollars before we go, an' I'd not be dang'rously surprised if that little event was to come off right slick quick time. Eh? What?" The last words were addressed savagely to the wizened little man, who could scarce reach Jem's elbow.

Barely ten words were exchanged. Quick as thought the Texan stretched his long arm over the table, and seized the cards in the banker's hand. There was a roar and a swift surge in the crowd. Like lightning the old man drew a pistol and fired; but Jem's mate dashed the table against his body, and the ball struck a priest standing beside. The candles were stamped out in an instant, and a rush for the door ensued. There was a fierce clash of steel as every man drew his machete against an unknown foe. Three pistol-shots were fired almost simultaneously, and by the flashes I could mark the course of the fight. Two bodies were already on the ground; the banker was powerless in Jem's arms, while his protectors were at bay before the other Yankee, who stood, revolver in hand, protecting his friend. High over the din of clanging steel and shouts and frightened cries the Texan's voice rang out shrill:

"Cl'ar the door there—cl'ar the door! The cards are waxed! Let me out with him into the open! By the etarnal! I'll crush his ribs in if you don't cl'ar away!"

The whole row did not occupy ten seconds. I vaulted over the counter behind me, and alighted in the road with a crash of bottles swept off. Though determined to protect my acquaintances, I could do them no service in the shanty, where they were quite capable of defending themselves; but with pistol cocked I awaited their appearance in the open. There, I knew, would be the real fight. Another shot—a yell of pain, and they dashed through the door.

"J——! J——! Where are yer? Sim 's down on the lintel! Thunder of heaven! Range off, you yellow cusses!"

Sim staggered up, streaming with blood, from a terrific

cut in his shoulder. We stood together in the middle of the road, the centre of a circle of savage faces and flashing machetes. Not all were hostile, for the dwarf had never ceased to yell that the cards were waxed ; and as nearly all had lost to the bank, there were very few who were sorry for this chance of regaining their cash. But the banker had a means of arousing the peons to his help.

"A thousand dollars to the man who frees me!" he panted.

The words ended in a shriek, for the Texan crushed him like a bear. He dropped from those terrible arms, and lay moaning on the ground. Jem snatched the cards from his pocket, and beckoning to the respectable men of the crowd, who stood together at a distance—"Come ye here and look!" he shouted ; "the faces are waxed all over. See! I can stick two together, an' turn up what I please."

"Es verdad!" assented the lookers-on. "Don Juan has cheated."

"Give us back our money!" was now the yell, and a dozen peons dashed at the banker.

"No, yer don't!" cried Jem, standing across his body. "I guess we'll fix this matter more reasonable fair than that. Don Gregorio, you and J—— here shall count his money first, an' then we'll divide."

But things were not to be so easily arranged. One of the bank bullies pushed through the ring, followed by half-a-dozen peons, the poorest and most dangerous-looking of the crowd. Prefacing his declaration with a string of oaths, he shouted :

"Those are not Don Juan's cards—they are your own, you Yankee mule! Don Juan Zumbado is known as a sportsman over all Costa Rica, and never a word was said

against his honour. He is a Rico and a member of Congress, and he can pay those who help him, and avenge himself on those who do him injury. Amigos! will you let these filibusters murder two of your countrymen in your very sight? Don Juan, who is the spirit of honour, has offered a thousand dollars apiece to all who help him—come on then! Death to the filibusters!" But the muzzles of our pistols deterred the shouting crew, which was evidently convinced by the bully's eloquence.

"We must end this," said Jem to me; "Sim 's bleeding to death from that cut in his shoulder. I have a notion we can fix the matter up neat enough if that yeller-head has the pluck of a coyote. 'Twas me as begun the muss, an' I guess it's me as should put it through. Look hyar, hombres," he called to the crowd in Spanish, "this caballero an' I don't spice in our notions—what then? I've allurs heerd that the men of Costa Rica was notably distinguished by a love of fair play, an' a nice regard for manly virtoo. The caballero has a machete, an' a thundering big one; give me another, a fair field, an' we'll settle our diff'rences so quick as you shan't see!"

This proposition, quite usual in Spanish America, was received with a cheer. Half-a-dozen weapons were instantly offered, and in a minute the champions stood opposite to one another, armed with the heavy guardless sword called a "machete." Delivering Sim to the care of the padrone and his wife, I took my station in the ring formed round the combatants.

Jem stood square and firm, holding the weapon from his body in a hanging guard. The Costa Rican took the cramped attitude chosen by his countrymen in such a case, the machete along his thigh, and his left arm wrapped in a

cloak. Full five minutes they moved warily about the ring without striking a blow; then, quick as a pistol flash, the guarded left arm was thrust on the point of Jem's machete, and a furious lunge from the hip almost pierced his body. But the Texan was too quick. Too many times had he seen a countryman so entrapped by the wily swordsmen of the South. He expected this play when taking the guard. Drawing his machete back by a bend of the elbow, he swept it round in a parry delivered with all his force. The Costa Rican stumbled forward, thrown off his balance by the weight of the blow—Jem's sword swung through the air and cut deep into his neck and throat.

He dropped his machete and fell upon one knee; then, like a jaguar he sprang up, and, heedless of a thrust that pierced his chest, buried a knife in Jem's body. This weapon the villain had concealed in the folds of his mantle. The champions fell together.

We dug a hole beside the road, and there we buried poor Jem Whately, as Christian sepulture is denied the heretic in that enlightened country. We bound up his mate's wound, and made what arrangement was possible with the padrone, and then we trotted on to supper at Esparsa.

"They say the bank had won about twenty-five ounces," observed Paisley, over his evening pipe. "Three men were killed stone dead, and three dangerously or mortally wounded. That gives rather more than £20 apiece for a life, and £10 for a bad hurt. About the market price, I suppose."

"It's not a bad figure as things go here," I said; "the worst of it is, *no one was paid*."

THE PRICE OF MY DIAMONDS.

It was not as a novice, as has been shown, that I went to the "dry fields." Nearly three months' experience—December to February—at the river diggings of Pniel had made me acquainted with most matters necessary to be known in the enterprise. It may be useful to observe that this was the winter of 1871-72. I had worked without loss if without profit. My Pniel claim had given me one diamond alone, but that was a beauty, and I sold it for £70. It cost a man but 2*s.* per day to live in a tent, all expenses included. My Kaffir Charles cost 16*s.* per month in wages, and 3*s.* a week for food. £70 goes a long way at such a rate of expenditure, and I had still more than £60 left of the capital I brought from England. Perhaps a prudent man would have given the river claim a longer trial, but, had I been prudent, I should never have been a digger. It was not in me, at least, to resist for another day the fascination of the dry fields, so near, so easy to work (in February, '72), and so fabulously rich.

Of course a capital thus limited would not go farther at New Rush than in Lombard Street, but there was Old de Beer's, and Dutoitspan, and, at the worst, Bultfontein,

where I should not be classed as a ridiculous pauper. The diggings of Pniel are no mine, like those mentioned above. What diamonds are there have simply been deposited by the river, and to find one is no such very strong encouragement to expect others. My best friends, and kind ones I had, recommended a move, but they cautiously abstained from specific direction. Whilst at Pniel I had never felt disposed to spend a £5 note, and three or four working days, in a visit to the great camps. I knew nothing of them practically, but my Zulu Charles had been amongst the first of his race up here, having travelled with Captain Rolleston, the practical discoverer of the fields. Of New Rush, indeed, he knew nothing, but in that pit of jewels I felt no more interest than in the gold-room of the Bank—both were equally out of reach. He had worked, however, in each of the elder dry diggings, and worked with no unintelligent eye. His vote was very strong for Bultfontein. Charles professed to have been in the very next claim when the ninety-carat gem was picked up there, and to have actually seen the "sorter" snatch his thirty-seven-carat from the same hole. "I know where it-ta been, *baas!*" he said again and again. "I take *baas* to that-ta claim as straight as lines. No man work now thar—Claim jumpable!" Could anybody resist this? I knew it to be true that in the early days of Bultfontein a ninety-carat and a thirty-seven-carat had been found in one claim, whereof the locality is now much disputed. Think, ladies, of a diamond that would scarcely enter a wine-glass! Could even a "man-wretch" be tempted by such a prize and hold out?

The resolve was made at length. We struck our tent, and packed our furniture in its canvas. For the reasonable sum of 5*s.*, a boer returning undertook to convey

the load to Benning and Martin's hotel on Dutoitspan. He offered me a lift also for half-a-crown, but I declined to separate from Charles, for whom I felt and feel a real friendship. As the dirty boer declined with scorn to carry a Kaffir, I cheerfully prepared for our twenty-five mile trudge together.

One remark let me interpose here. On the credit of a large experience in many parts of the world, I deny that the odour of the negro is universal. Most have it, and a great many are offensive to a degree, but not a few are just as pleasant, or unpleasant, to windward, as a white working man on a hot day, having no trace of the peculiar negro smell. Of such was Charles.

We started in the evening about four o'clock, for the mid-day sun, and the dust and flies, are things terrible at that time of year. Behind Pniel is high ground, very rocky and broken, covered with a heavy red sand, which only bears a prickly bush of acacias. The sun was just setting as we gained the further edge of this hill, and looked from its steep brow. Drearier prospect is not anywhere in all the earth. Mile on mile away the level spreads, unbroken by accident of ground or colour. No shadows darken the unending waste. No tree appears, unless the bushes round us might be so flattered. In the foreground of our landscape the thin, fine grass burns orange under the sun-rays, but at a hundred yards' distance the glow dies down to dull monotony of grey. No sky effects can charm these long South African plains. For two brief weeks each year the level blossoms into a wondrous parterre, but its beauty fades, and the bright vision is recalled only by ugly spikes and withered tassels. Not the Egyptian desert is more dreary than the *veldt* when, as here, it has no bordering line

of hills. The Sahara shows variety of outline, if not of hue; the *veldt* is an abomination of flatness, monotint, and solitude.

Following a trail thirty yards wide, at nine o'clock, in pitchy darkness, we reached the Half-way House Canteen, and I slept two hours on a bench beneath its canvas roof. All through that time there was coming and going, trample of horses, creak of wheel, oath of white man, Kaffir shout, clatter of plate and tinkle of glass. Such a bustle have our fields produced in this lonely land, inhabited by the countrymen of Rip Van Winkle. Midnight saw us on the track again with the moon rising, and a heavy dew under foot. The dappled *springbok* bounded off when we were close beside them, and the big bustards called at our very feet. After three hours' brisk travel, Charles raised his hand and pointed:

"New Rush, *baas!*"

I looked with all my civilised eyes, but saw only the endless monotony of *veldt*, rolling here in gentle undulations. Half a mile further Charles pointed again, and I made out a shining crown of canvas on the top of a distant swell. In twenty minutes more we entered the purlieus of the camp, and Charles anxiously warned me to keep the middle of the road, "for," said he, "the dogs tear man up!"

After passing numberless waggons where the boer-diggers lived, and pretty tents adorned with ribands and braid, and filthy open places where dogs snarled and crunched amidst stinking carcases, and open cesspools, and all impurity, the moon went down, and we had scarcely yet entered the camp. The road became a sort of cutting, between walls of finest sand, so high that nothing could be seen over them.

"Those 'sortings,' *baas!*" exclaimed Charles. "Claims behind!"

I clambered up, sinking to the knee, but only saw a pitch-black gulf. Going on we entered a broad street lined with tents, houses of canvas, zinc, and wood; drinking-shops and stores. Here it was the dogs assailed us, and no small danger were we in. The thick of a running fight is no situation for the indulgence of rhapsody, and not till we had cleared the town could I marvel at ease upon the wonder of New Rush. What a city of enchantment! It is incredible enough to hear that this great camp of 50,000 souls was the loneliest of sheep-walks only five months before! But the wonders of its outside show sink to nothingness when one is told what wealth of gems has brought this multitude together, has built their shops and houses, and has made a thousand fortunes. New Rush diggings are barely eight acres in extent, but they had already yielded more than £2,000,000 worth of diamonds.* The Custom House officials of the colony put down the *public* export of gems at this time at £300,000 a month; and the private export, with the hoarding, could not have made less than £1,000,000 in the five months.

Diamond-digging, like gambling, does not foster the noble part of man. I fear it was with envy almost hateful that I marked the spacious tents, with canvas stable and servants' quarters, where some lucky fellow snored with a box or bag of jewels for a pillow. One or two most lordly dwellings, standing in disdain apart from the main roads,

* The sum is now no less than £9,000,000. The whole product of the South African fields up to the present is set by experts at £12,000,000 (1875); and there are no signs yet of exhaustion in the mines, although the supply is diminished, owing to difficulties of labour and machinery.

were brilliantly lit up ; choruses and scraps of excited talk floated to us on the morning air. But we met no living soul before we stood again upon the *veldt* beyond the camp. Old de Beer's digging, fenced with mountainous white walls of "sorted stuff," then rose upon the left, and, before half a mile was traversed, in the dim dawn we could see Dutoitspan, and Bultfontein not a thousand yards away. So near together are these four great mines, and yet there is not a single gem in the little slopes between them ; as well might you dig for diamonds in Regent Street.

Upon the stroke of five we halted at Benning and Martin's hotel in Dutoitspan. The boer diggers, who are very numerous here, were already about, for rising is to most of them a literal expression. In the habit in which they sleep they rise up, in the habit in which they work they go to bed. My good friend Martin also had shaken off dull sloth, and bade me, though as yet a stranger, bluff and cordial welcome.

"Tramped from Pniel, have you ?" said he, "then I expect it's not a little row will disturb your innocent slumbers ! We've no room, but there's one of the fellows just getting up in the dining-place. You can lie down on his bed, or in it, if you like, until Mrs. Martin sees what can be done."

Charles walked off to find some friends, and I followed the host past a bar built of planks and barrels, round the corner of a billiard-room, into that big barn which is Benning and Martin's *salle à general purposes*. The private rooms, in which I could claim no shelter, were divided from the hall by partitions of green baize, very much torn. But there were four iron bedsteads in the open, parallel to the rough table whereat Martin's clients take their meals, and

on one of them, yet warm, I gladly lay down. The early coffee was spread, then breakfast and then luncheon, before I moved. No beds in the world are comparable, whether for fleas or for sleep, with those of our diamond-fields.

Before sunset Charles and I had pitched our little tent. I asked Martin the rules about this matter of squatting, for a moment's glance showed that land must be very valuable here.

"Oh," said he, with a wave of the hand, "pitch wherever you like, outside the town and the diggings. That's the only rule. Never mind what the proprietors say." I chose a spot just behind the market square, and made myself comfortable therein, but I'll confess it did not surprise me to receive a notice some days after that the landowners expected 10*s.* a month rent for my standing-room. I thought the demand simply just, considering what great prices were daily paid for land within the arbitrary boundaries of the township, only a few yards off. I knew I ought to pay, but I knew, also, there was no power to make me, and why should I, when ten thousand refused? The plea is unjustifiable, you say, but fancy yourself a diamond-digger, with but £100 capital. Are you sure you would be Quixotically just towards a few wealthy gentlemen resident in England?

In December, 1871, Dutoitspan had been discovered and peopled just twelve months. It is the eldest, and the largest in area, of the four dry diggings, measuring almost sixteen acres of diamondiferous surface. Four months after the discovery of Dutoitspan, the neighbouring hill of Bultfontein, not 300 yards away, was found to be also big with gems, more numerous, and of better class, but much smaller as a rule. When these fields were opened,

the craft of diamond *mining* was purely tentative, and any one who talked loud or learnedly could sway the general belief. The reader has not failed to marvel that the exact spot where a ninety and a thirty-seven carat gem were found should be forgotten. The explanation is that in early times the yield of a claim was supposed to lie all upon the surface, literally to be picked up. After the area had been parcelled out, like squares on a chess-board, to the diggers present, not for a fortnight did it occur to some unknown genius even to scrape with a bit of iron. Weeks passed again before spades were used. Even after the diggers had got thus far on the road to knowledge, it was believed that diamonds could not be found below three feet—then below seven feet—and then New Rush was struck, in August, and an astonished community discovered that the deeper one goes, the more and the better are one's finds up to some point unknown. It was a result of this gradual progress in knowledge that many claims were abandoned when the surface had been but scratched, many more at the supposed limit of three feet, and hundreds at seven feet, no matter what success had been attained. No one, of course, had thought roads necessary between the claims. What could be easier than to shift the rubbish from one part of a claim to the other? But when diggers began to go down ten and twenty and fifty feet, insurmountable difficulties were found to arise from this want of roads. Dutoitspan and Bultfontein, and, in a less degree, Old de Beer's, have become mere labyrinths of mound and hole from this want. New Rush alone is properly provided, and thus it gains an inestimable advantage over the other diggings.

With an air of great importance Charles woke me next day.

"I take *baas* to the ninety-carat claim, straight as lines," he said.

We descended the slope of the "pan," a brown expanse, kneaded and puddled by hoof of ox and waggon-wheel, and trampling horse, and drove of sheep. Rounding the filthy pool, on the edge of which a dead ox lay, half drowned, half mud-smothered, the which a party of police, with harnessed horses, were endeavouring to lasso from a distance—we began to climb the hill of Bultfontein. Charles led me haphazard, as a crow flies, across the claims. The prizes of this digging are not generally esteemed sufficient to repay the agony of summer heats, and the labour of carrying the "stuff" over break-neck paths for sifting. I don't think there were more than thirty parties at this time, and all of these had claims along the single road leading to the Residence, where lived Mr. Webb, representative of the proprietors, upon the top of the hill. No simile occurs to me that would convey to the reader's mind an accurate idea of this *kopje*. Perhaps, if I say that Charles guided me across a riddle, as it were, the wires representing our path and the open loops a precipice of varying depth on every hand, I should best make our position understood. But the riddle has nothing to show for the hillocks of shifting sand which barred our progress every moment, over which or round which we must clamber, with the risk of a limb each step. My Kaffir's face began to assume that ridiculously doleful expression by which a Zulu shows anxiety. He hesitated, and looked around for landmarks. At length, after some wandering to and fro, he stood upon the top of a mound quite twenty feet high, composed of siftings and rubbish from the deserted claims around, and said:

"Here be, *baas*. Can't be 'where else!"

"The ninety-carat claim is under this heap?" I asked in amaze.

"Here be. Can't be 'where else!" repeated Charles.

We were quite fifty yards from the road, and as much from the open space around the Residence, over which, indeed, it was forbidden to take "stuff." To clear our claim it would have been necessary to carry away all the mound in buckets, along a six-inch path, winding in and out between precipices.

"Why," I exclaimed, "six men could not remove it in a month!"

"All of that," replied Charles, dolefully.

So much for the ninety-carat claim! I went about the hill, and talked with such few men as were still working. They all seemed prosperous, or contented, at least; had they not been so, indeed, they'd not have remained through the hot season. My Kaffir's scheme having failed, through no fault of his, poor fellow, I returned to the Pan, and entered Martin's billiard-room. Every rank of society and every class of digger had its representative there.

We have not in Dutoitspan that reckless and extravagant youth, generally an ex-subaltern of some crack regiment, who is characteristic of New Rush. Diggers there are as well-born, but mostly older and more careful of their gains. A ragged coat affords no evidence of a man's condition at Dutoitspan. The dirtiest will produce from amongst their rags a box of gems to make a duchess jealous. Amongst the pool players was one whom I knew afterwards as the heir-apparent to an ancient barony; another, the eldest son of a diamond merchant, the wealthiest in London; another, colonial born, whose father owned 50,000 sheep and 20,000 acres; another who had sold one

diamond for £5,000, two over £3,000 each, and hundreds at a lesser price. These men, except the diamond kooper, could not be distinguished, so far as costume went, from the crowd around. Their coats were as napless, their hats as shapeless, and their mask of white dust as thick. Each wore a digger's belt, with the butcher knife behind, as did every one in the room. Two or three men lay in drunken or wearied slumber on the benches. The noise and reckless conduct of a New Rush bar were quite absent.

Presently entered an old schoolfellow, famed here for his success. I hastened to him, made myself known, and began to talk.

"You couldn't have met me at a luckier moment," said E——. "Did you notice a claim at Bultfontein, that was so and so?"

I remembered it well, for of all the shafts in that digging this was by far the deepest and best excavated.

"I heard last night," continued E——, "that those fellows are working without a licence. The fools! To risk their fortune and a prison for the sake of 10*s.* a month! Now, listen."

E—— sketched out a very simple plot for getting a good claim gratis, but it did not recommend itself to me. He laughed, and then got angry, declaring that with such absurd notions, one should stop at home in England. I had only one answer, "That a man is a thief," I said, "can't be a justification for cheating him."

At this point of the argument entered a short, stout gentleman, well known apparently to the best men present. "This occurs *à propos!*" exclaimed E——; "here is an agent of the proprietors sent from London to report upon the state of things. If he approve, what shall you

say? It won't be cheating a thief to get back one's own property from him!"

I could only answer that my objections would vanish, if the proprietors gave their sanction. The introduction took place, the matter was explained to Mr. B——, and he announced his decision at once in a quick, off-hand manner. "By all means! Government has tied us hand and foot, and then refuses to prevent people picking our pockets. They won't inspect the claims, nor let us! Circumvent these scoundrels, and, rely on it, we'll give you any protection we can!"

No time did we conspirators waste. Mr. B—— took me to the office of the company's lawyer next door, where, in a very few moments, a severely official form was drawn, nominating me assistant-inspector of claims, and enjoining all diggers of Bultfontein to display their license at my demand. B—— forged the signature, "R. Forrester Rorke, Claim-Inspector's office, Dörstfontein," with a dashing pen. "All's fair in love and war," he said. E—— meanwhile had brought the licensed diggers at work round the unlawful claim to promise their help in our honest fraud.

We set out, accompanied by the lawyer's clerk, once a gentleman of large fortune. E—— guided us to one of the confederate parties, to whom I gravely showed my commission, which was instantly obeyed. Another and another we visited, for form's sake, and all went smoothly. The occupants of the doomed claim were on the alert long before we reached it. With faces pale and in great excitement they watched our progress from the summit of a hillock. "If the beggars stand their ground," whispered E——, "it may be awkward." But there was no retreat possible. All our hearts beat fast, I think,

as I tendered my commission to the brawny leader of the gang and demanded his license. The ruffian's hands trembled and the sweat ran down his face, whilst he spelled through the order. A violent refusal, which we feared, "must have blown the plant," in digging phrase, though it could not have failed to ruin the thieves. But when we were all wishing ourselves well out of this scrape, the paper was suddenly thrown back in my face, and the ruffian fled, followed by his mates. For appearance sake we pursued a yard or two and then returned. E—— jumped into the hole, and struck a pick in its soil, shouting, "This claim is jumpable, and I jump it. Give you luck, old fellow! It's yours!" Within an hour we had reported at the inspector's office, and Charles and I had taken possession, under a genuine signature of Captain Rorke. So I got my claim at Bultfontein, and to this day I am puzzled to decide whether it was honestly got or no. But this I am sure of, that none better was in working on the *kopje* in my time. The 1st of April found me in possession of £600 profit, owing no man anything.

The dry diggings of South Africa are as truly mines as our coal pits. The diamond is found in a bed of tufaceous lime, but how or why it came there I don't profess to know. Over the tufaceous lime, which we call the grit or the "stuff," spreads the reddish sand of the district. Gems are found in this also, and lying on the surface; but in such cases they have evidently worked up, or have been washed out from their natural bed. I know it is denied by scientific persons that the diamond has ever been found in the spot where it was created; but to such I would only say: go to South Africa and refute yourselves! Their single argument is: the diamond must have a rocky matrix, like

other precious stones. Yours have no such matrix, and are therefore proved to have been washed to their resting-places, just as in Indian or Brazilian mines. To refute a mere airy assertion is impossible; but there is absolutely no fact registered that justifies the inference of a rocky matrix as necessary; and thus the argument falls. No rivers have ever approached the dry diggings, and no trace of floods appear on any hand.

For my part, I engage the reader to believe that tufaceous lime is the nursing mother of the diamond, and I pledge my head upon it, as Kaffirs say.

I have told how we wash out our "stuff" on the river. At the dry fields, after digging the grit, we riddle it in a coarse riddle, preserving only what drops through—unless a man be a favourite with the gods, and his eye light upon a monstrous cube, too large to pass the mesh; then doth he rejoice, and his rivals inly groan! We pass this, again, through a fine riddle, gather in a bucket the grit which will not run, and spread it on a table, whereat the sorter sits, handling an iron scraper, or bit of barrel hoop. With this instrument he spreads and examines the heap of shingle, if haply amongst it may gleam a diamond. In my claim, which was a very good one for Bultfontein, I found on an average one in eight buckets of "stuff;" which came to rather more than one a day, but they were all small—the largest only five carats.

It is perfectly certain, and admitted on all hands, that such a method of working entails an awful waste. Few riddles, in my time, would hold a half-carat, none a quarter. These fall through, and are lost. We had a lordly way of conducting all our business.

Diamonds, however, quickly swell a man's bank

account, even though they be "under five." What with my luck and other means, I had £726 in hand on the 1st of April. With such a sum it was folly to linger at Bultfontein, the poorest of the fields. Cold weather had now set in. From every farm in South Africa almost, one or more members of the family were hurrying to our camps. Half the village shops were deserted by their *employés*—by the owner himself very often—and petitions for convict labour in every class of service lumbered the tables of the colonial assembly. Such journals as still survived the general flight of compositors described the country districts as ruined, and called our fields "the South African Hydra." Nearly all the helpless deserters who came up sought fortune on Bultfontein, by reason of its cheapness, emptiness, and great abundance in small diamonds. More than a hundred claims deserted had been re-opened within a month, and "the poor man's *kopje*," as it is called, was daily traversed with an anxious eye by parties seeking working room. Now or never was the time to sell. When it spread abroad that the celebrated claim, No. — actually lay for purchase, it was a race with new comers and old which should be first to bid. Few, however, could offer the sum I demanded, and they went sorrowful away. £274, no more and no less, was my price, for I had it superstitiously in view to start my New Rush speculation with £1,000 precisely. Within three days a purchaser was found at that figure, the agent of a rich and speculative lady in Natal, the widow of a clergyman. By-the-bye, what unlikely persons turned up amongst our speculators—bankers, parsons, ladies of every age, London tradesmen, Australian squatters, Cape Town officials, priests in great force; none of whom had ever seen a camp nor a diamond

in the rough. I must add that the confidence placed in our diggers by these unseen and distant patrons rarely suffered abuse. One party of Zulus indeed, fitted out by a well-known missionary, carried their loyalty even to indiscretion. Finding that black men were not allowed to work on their own account, these fellows hired themselves at New Rush, with the mere object of stealing every diamond they set eyes on—not for their own profit, mind you, but for their poor master. The thefts were not discovered, and in process of time the party returned, with a noble bag of gems for the missionary, who, overjoyed, was so injudicious as to ask questions. The ingenuous thieves confessed their *modus operandi* without difficulty. Their shocked employer advertised for a length of time in the camp papers, with hopes of discovering whom he had thus innocently defrauded, but I believe no claimant appeared whose case would bear investigation.

On April 12th I moved tent, tools, and Kaffirs to the other end of Bultfontein farm, where it borders New Rush diggings. The lordly camp at this spot I have already sketched in a rough way, its wide streets, big warehouses, luxurious tents, with *succursales* of stable and servants' quarter, where cooks—Hindoo or Malay—exercise their utmost art. New Rush is so vastly more rich than the other diggings that it has an appearance quite apart. The men are noisier and more dissipated; to many of them sudden wealth is found to bring ruin. There is here a larger proportion of diggers gentle-born and bred, and hence a different tone of language prevails; one not more decent, perhaps, nor less blasphemous, but of another inflexion. The months gone by since I passed through the town, tramping to Bultfontein by night, had but enlarged

and beautified it. Everywhere the carpenters, masons, and tent-builders were busy, for, though diggers increase not at New Rush—finding no inch of land to take—business stands arrive every hour and the census swells. So the clank of hammers resounds all day. That man who has found fortune in a bell-tent now soars to a "frame-house;" the ambition of the frame-householder rises to iron and wood. The white sand of the streets is almost carpeted with chips and bits of canvas. The little veldt bushes, six inches high, which still survive upon the edges of the road, and flower beneath the warehouse walls, are choked with shavings. And the camp grows daily.

But, in the diggings attached thereto, great changes had occurred. When this field was first discovered, the Diggers' Committee confiscated seven and a half feet alongside each claim marked on it, to make roads. But the ground taken from his claim did not less remain the property of the claim-holder. He could and did tunnel under it, leaving not an inch of crust beyond what he chose to think safe for traffic. The old Committee looked very closely after these excavators, and often compelled a digger to bridge a spot he'd made dangerous. But in November, 1871, the English Government swooped down upon our fields, and, under the new rule, tunnelling and scraping were carried recklessly on. Land-slips occurred, as, how should they not, where pits are sunk sheer down on either side, forty to sixty feet, without a beam or prop to shore the causeway of grit! Angry and excited meetings ensued, with a bewildered magistrate or inspector in the chair. Roads were closed—first one and then another—for surface-bridging and repairs; but no real remedy suggested itself. Meanwhile, the Kaffirs refused to work at any wage in

such hourly peril, and white men answered your proposal with a curse and jeer. A few claim-holders negotiated with their comrades over the way, and the roadway was sold in a lump to some speculator. The terms of one such bargain came before me. Messrs. Stockdale, storekeepers, of Dutoitspan, gave £1,000 down for the broken roadway between two claims on No. 3 road, thirty feet by fifteen feet. The inspector sanctioned this sale, on a proviso that a stilt bridge should be built across the gap, at a cost of not less than £500; the whole work to be completed, stuff removed, bridge built, and road re-opened within ten days. I don't know how the speculation finally turned out, but the buyers were out of pocket near £2,000 before they began to "sort."

A panic ruled then in New Rush. Every man took life in hand descending into his claim. An enterprise less incredibly profitable than is diamond-digging on this *kopje*, would have come to a standstill long since. But New Rush did not cease to prosper, though its yield fell off greatly, and the price of diamonds rose on the spot. At such a time I thought to see my way to fortune in purchasing some piece of road, as Messrs. Stockdale had done. On road No. 9 I fixed my eye; for, with such small capital, I could not hope to enter the arcana of the treasure-pit. Let me here remark that, although a return of £9,000,000 sterling, from eight acres of land, be sufficiently surprising, there is a wonder beyond that. Roads 1, 2, and 3 have given full one half this sum; roads 7 and 9 a third; and all the remainder of the *kopje* but a sixth. After much trouble, and much diplomacy, I brought two parties of diggers together—men working with the road between them, of course—and closed a bargain. For £300 I bought the

width of a quarter-claim—seven and a half feet, that is, by fifteen feet nominally—much undermined, and seriously diminished by land-slips. The inspector doubtless heard my proposition with delight; but he gravely suggested that I should bridge over all the claim, offering to force a sale on the remaining owners. Leaving him to this unpleasant task, I went out. Almost the first three acquaintances I met in the street jumped at this opportunity. In the open-handed way of business which our Yankee diggers had taught us, each handed me a cheque for £300. The inspector, meanwhile, had officially condemned the road; and, under his pressure, five out of the six parties, whose consent was necessary for my operations, had given way; one still held out. For the bridging of our three-quarter claim, the inspector required a guarantee of £400; and ten days he allowed for the building. To these terms my partners consented. Surely I had reason to bless the fates!

Two days afterwards, the road was closed for wheel vehicles, and our work began. Compelled by the inspector's authority, the diggers on either side staked down and made firm their ground. With half-a-dozen Zulus, whom my boy Charles knew how to collect and manage, the stuff was carried out as fast as men could dig and fill their sacks. On the tap road, mule carts loaded it up at a charge of 1*s.* 6*d.* per load, and carried it as fast as the traffic would permit to my tent. All worked like horses, whilst I flew about in an agony of haste. Only ten days in which to clear away a wall of earth—each cubic inch of which, mark you, might contain a fortune!—full fifty feet high, by twenty-two and a half feet long, and fifteen feet wide; also to erect a bridge of the same dimensions. By nightfall we had sunk barely three feet, a rate of progress that would

not complete the work in twice our allotted time. All the evening I ran from bar to bar, seeking white labourers. One only could I engage, even at the price of 8*s.* a day. Next morning, having bought my man a pair of boots and set him to work, I flew across the *veldt* to Bultfontein, prospecting for labour. Amongst my poor acquaintance there I recruited three others at a like wage, and a fourth in Dutoitspan; this last a working Paddy, rarest and best of all labourers on the earth, according to my experience. I put the five into a hackney cart, and sent them to New Rush as fast as horses could gallop. By noon they were all busy, and at nightfall we had sunk the gap ten feet. The following night we were eighteen feet down, and I felt easy about the result, as did the carpenter who had contracted for our bridge.

On this day, Friday, about twelve o'clock, a great crack was observed across the road, three claims above our working. Hundreds of people came to look at it. The inspector ordered staking, &c., but no particular danger was anticipated. Some parties in the immediate neighbourhood stopped work, but not many. At nightfall I went home, very tired, but confident of the result. Earliest dawn saw me out of doors. I was drinking a cup of coffee with Charles, when the two Zulus who had it in charge to call our white labourers came bounding up, breathless and excited. They spoke a few words to Charles, who let his cup fall. "Oh *baas*, oh!" he cried; "road 9 fall down all 'long from reef!" I waited for no explanation. At top speed I rushed to the claims, followed by my Kaffirs. All New Rush camp was astir. Men ran and shouted, panic-struck, for road 9 is one of the fullest on the *kopje*. Halting for no call, I dashed up the main street, rounded the hill of

sortings, and entered the tap road, which was crammed with excited diggers. Thousands, black and white, all mixed, stood on the lofty mounds of sand. I pushed through and reached the head of the road. Here the crush was densest, for one could go no farther. But I exclaimed that this accident had ruined me, and they good-naturedly made room. What a sight! Where once had been road 9 lay a yawning precipice, sixty feet deep and eighty yards long. The remains of the road stood like a broken causeway across it, nowhere more than twenty feet high. It seemed to have parted in the middle down great part of its length, falling into the claims on either side. Just where, as I guessed, my purchase had stood, the earth had toppled over to the right, dropping barely a yard deep of rubbish on the other side. If the accident had taken place in daytime it must have cost hundreds of lives. But what did I care at that moment?

Whilst yet the shock of this great disaster kept me speechless, a call was raised for ladders and ropes. Some adventurous fellows began to descend the precipice by the aid of its inequalities and holes. No time was to be lost. Two friendly bystanders lent me a shoulder each, and I mounted up to address the crowd: "Look here, brother diggers!" I cried, "I ask your assistance, for I'm a ruined man." The honest fellows ceased their hubbub on the instant.

"Brother diggers, we all know the rule—and a fair rule it is in a general way—that all a man finds in his claim belongs to him, and no one else, however it got there. But this thing we see before us is beyond rule. I had, last night, £900 worth of stuff on road 9; and, to-day, by no fault of mine, that stuff has tumbled into the claims of the

men who sold it me! This may be your case to-morrow. I ask you, in bare justice: can those men claim my money and my stuff too?" "No, no!" cried some. "It's the rule!" cried others.

Meanwhile, the crowd began to descend by ladders and ropes. Half-mad, I tried to keep them back—appealing and pushing alternately. Those uninterested in the question mostly took my side; but the diggers of the road began to assemble in force, and they naturally claimed the right to look after their own property. I was buffeted about, and several times only just escaped a headlong fall into the precipice. My partners came up—men of influence in the camp—and their support greatly increased my party. Something like a free fight threatened, and inspectors and police were all snoring in their beds, of course. In the midst of the row, appeared that digger who had refused to sell his share of the roadway. He was a burly boer, not ill-meaning, perhaps; but unable to perceive more than one side of the question—that side his own. The man pushed through in silent, brutal fashion, and prepared to descend by a rope. I sprang forward to prevent him; for, of all diggers on the *kopje*, this was the last we would have wished to see scrambling amongst our precious grit. I laid my hand on his shoulder, and then—I don't charge Beaujean with the result; it may have been that I over-balanced—then my feet suddenly gave way! One glimpse I caught in falling; a glimpse of horror-stricken faces, and a crowd struggling; a hoarse cry from hundreds of throats I heard, and then—nothing but empty wind above me and below!

Oh, the agony of that long illness which followed! I almost cursed the mercy that had saved me—with half

the bones of my body broken—to endure such a recovery. The heats came back before I could move a limb; and with the heats came back the flies and vermin. In a tent, eight feet diameter, protected from the awful sun by but a sheet of canvas, given up as a prey to all foul things that creep and buzz, I longed for death to end the torment. My poor Charles—kindest and most faithful of all Kaffirs living—waited on me like a slave; but no nursing could lighten that agony. Enough of the awful recollection, which words could not picture! Towards the end of July, at a deadly risk, and with unutterable pains, I got myself carried to the hotel at Dutoitspan; and there, nursed by the kindest of hostesses, I began to mend. Not in all those months had torture left me spirit to inquire what was the result of our speculation; but on a morning I heard one of my partners in the dining-room, which was divided from me only by a baize partition. From him I learnt that the question of ownership of the lost stuff had been decided by ordinary rule—against us! My hard-earned money was lost, and I turned to the wall with a groan. "But we've not done so very badly," continued A. "In the first place, we escape the cost of building that bridge; and the stuff already cleared, with what was left *in situ*, has given forty-seven diamonds, lodged in the bank against your recovery." Heedless of bandages and pains, I sat up: "What value?"

"About £2,800 we calculate. I'll bring them if you like." That was the first painless moment I had had for months. The diamonds were my best nurse; I played with them all day for a week, sending them duly back each night, in charge of a policeman. The end of August I could walk about with a stick and a crutch. In October I

bade an eternal farewell to the diamond-fields. My partners, very handsomely, gave me one-half the profit of our speculation. Had they followed my advice, and sold upon the spot, we should have been £500 richer; but they insisted on my taking them to England. On arriving here, I found the European merchants actually re-shipping Cape diamonds to the Cape for sale to our obstinate diggers, and making a pretty profit on this ridiculous transaction. This is the strictest truth; and, for evidence, they are doing the same thing still. I followed that example, and thus escaped a greater loss; for my partners sold our gems at £2,300.

Sum total of my story: at Pniel I cleared my expenses; at Bultfontein I made just £1,000, what with diamonds and claim; at New Rush, £1,155 net. My year upon the diamond-fields, all expenses of travel and illness cleared, returned me £2,000; but the price I paid was heavy.

AN EGYPTIAN MARTYR.

"EVERY creed has its martyrs!" observed the mild one of our company.

"Every creed?" exclaimed the travelled one, "say every profession, and most businesses! To my mind each poor devil who owns a baby is a hero, and he who has more than he can keep is nothing less than a martyr. There's heroism in a cobbler of my acquaintance such as history won't match off-hand. In wandering about the world as I've done, one gets something used up towards martyrs. They lie thick in every track, martyrs of creed, of science, of philanthropy, of 'ology' and 'ism' without end. Black and white and yellow, they are found of every colour. Thousands of men at this moment are willing to lay down their lives for a beetle, and not a few have done it! Martyrs for creed! Why, I knew a fellow who martyrised himself for the love of old Pharaoh and the god Apis and all that balderdash!"

"Eh? Tell us about that," said the mild man. "He died of fever, I suppose?"

"He didn't die, for I saw him a few days since, here, in London. But he lived ten years face to face with sudden death, and he lost his wits in that companionship. The other day I met a man in Regent Street, whose face

called up a vision. That often happens to me—and to others also, no doubt. Some object suddenly put before me will recall a scene, and I may search long before I find what connection lies between itself and the vision it summons. This man was tall and lank, red-whiskered, bearded, having pale blue eyes, with a wild, unsteady look. On meeting him, without wish or consciousness, I was carried to a hot and sandy plain, dazzling bright under the sun-rays. A long, low streak of green followed a line of hills upon the right, and I was aware of a mighty river flowing. Before me sand, pale and blinding bright, stretching in slope and hollow towards a ridge of yellow mountains. All the space between full of mighty ruins—here a statue, standing like a tower, there a cluster of giant columns, there an arch through which the Titans might have passed to war against the gods. Lofty as the hills themselves, that fortress yonder, in the distance. Halls that would hold the parliament of all the world stood, chequered with airy shadow, amidst the grove of palm-trees. All the ground was rough with carved stones shattered, and monuments half-buried. Where lies that scene, and what memories associate it with the man just beheld?

"Such connections puzzle and irritate me until I can make them out. I turned and followed him, pondering. Ruins have I seen in plenty, but such as those, erect as rocks upon a sea of sand, could lie nowhere but in Egypt. The palms, too, were dates. Yes, Egypt must be the land in which I saw that face. But where?

"He turned into a bar and drank. It was a hot day, and the air seemed to choke him. With lean and claw-like fingers he eased his collar, and I saw a long red scar

half encircling his neck. Then it all came back to me, the story near forgotten! This man was a martyr to the hieroglyphic creed.

"No wonder that memory recalled so well the scene I have rudely sketched, for it lay before my eyes through many a sweltering day. Never mind exactly where it was —the man is yet alive. One April morning I arrived there in my boat. Under a monstrous arcade of world-old pillars lay simmering in the heat a few mud huts. Hard by was the village dove-cot, half its roof hidden by panting pigeons. They crushed to that side which a few glimmering branches of date-tree sheltered. The clumsy, sprawling limbs of a doom-palm near gave a shadow to a flock of frisky doves and mottled hoopoos. From the roof of the centre hut hung pendulous a tattered scarlet flag. Thither I bent my steps, for no soul was in sight on all the sultry plain, between cool river and burnt rocks. Mine was not the regular season of travel on the Nile. Had the month been November instead of April, the sight of my boat off their shore would have brought out every Arab within half a score miles round. But what could a vessel carry at that time of year but some ruthless recruiting party? So every soul had fled to the usual hiding-places. I hoped to find the *sheikh* magnanimously awaiting his persecutors, but on reaching the lowly door overhung by that nameless strip of bunting, neither man nor beast gave answer to my call. Some living creature there was within, for I heard a faint and monotonous sighing, a low wail that somehow seemed to be in character with the place. Returning to the boat, I ordered the hoisting of the English flag at the masthead, though with but little confidence that the Arabs would be reassured thereby. The

recruiting parties of the Pasha sometimes use devices much more ingenious than false colours, and the English flag is among their commonest decoys. I sat down by the water's edge, in shadow of the bank, and waited the result, my dragoman beside me. 'I wonder where the Englishman is!' says he. I asked what Englishman, and he replied:

"'There has been a native of your country living here ever since I have known the river. He lodges at the *sheikh's* house, where you knocked, and employs himself all day in the ruins, trying to read what they have written on them. More than ten years he's been here, and in all that time has never left the neighbourhood.'

"'How does he live?' I asked, greatly struck by the idea of a civilised creature taking up his abode in that sea of sun-burnt sand.

"'During the summer months he collects things from the Arab people, and digs amongst the mountains and finds things, and makes pictures of things, you know. And when winter comes round, and the rich people begin to pass up the river, he goes aboard their *dabeahs* and sells the things. They pay so much money, and so much in paints and paper and preserved meats and such like, which they send from Cairo. I have now aboard the boat a lot of little parcels, coming from the Duchess of S., who bought several hundred pounds' worth of things from him.'

"'What were they?'

"'Oh, I don't know! Old worn rings that the dead old Pharaohs carried, and beetles in stone, and necklaces, and bracelets, and golden ornaments. All manner of things, sir!'

"'Is he in no danger, alone here with the Arabs?'

"'Oh, danger enough! There's hundreds of 'em have

sworn by the Holy Stone to take his life. But he's lived in the house these ten years, sometimes attacked, often threatened, but alive enough the last time I was up this way.'

"I recollected the moaning noise inside the *sheikh's* dwelling, and rose, telling the dragoman to follow. We crossed the sand, and walked up the shadow of the colonnade. Each majestic pillar, painted and carved with a thousand strange figures, threw its outline to the east as clear, as keen, as deeply blue, as though cut in steel. Great faces gaped at us; red hands offered us a tribute; majestic gods, sitting on their thrones, stretched towards us the key of life. There were elephants' heads on their shoulders, and birds', and crocodiles', and nameless, formless creatures'. Their black eyes sleepily stared. Thousands of years had they been looking out upon the soft hot sand and their own blue shadows. We reached the *sheikh's* hut, a low-roofed dwelling, built between four pillars of the avenue; constructed of broken stones from the ruin. Through the mud which daubed them, here and there shone out a streak of red or ochre, thirty centuries old, but undimmed still. The lintel was a fragment of an obelisk. One set one's foot upon a holy face—of Isis himself, may be. The parapet of the flat roof was broken down; it hung in a dirty ruin of straw and mud down the walls.

"We paused to hear the moaning sound that had drawn my attention already. There was nothing audible from any side, save the low still shifting of the sand, which settled and sank under the sun-rays. No insect or birds gave note of life. We rapped again and listened—a little house-lizard chirped sharply as he scuttled away in mortal fright. Then a weak voice within asked in Arabic who we

were. My dragoman answered in his rough way, 'English, like you.' 'English?' cried the voice in accents of great joy and wonder. 'English? Let me come to you. Let me out to you. Break in the door for our blessed Lord's sake.'

"The slightest push forced down the feeble plank. We entered a room perhaps ten feet by twelve. Round three sides of it ran the inevitable divan. Its close air seemed so dark against the white sunshine I could scarcely see. There was a glitter of gold in one corner. A stench of bitumen and gas hung heavy on the air. The voice came from the further end, from under a hole half blocked outside by the hanging ruin of the parapet. I made towards it, but had taken scarce a step when down fell some rattling object propped against the wall. The dragoman stooped to pick it up, but drew back with a loud exclamation: 'It's a body!' he cried. The voice which had been addressing us incessantly in Arabic, ceased now. It began to chuckle and cough, pant and gurgle and laugh again, whilst I stood uncertain what to do. 'Poor old cuss!' muttered the habitant of the hut. 'Don't he just get kinder tumbled up an' down any how! Nigh upon every soul as comes here begins rough on him! Lord, an almighty big man was little yellow Pharaoh in them old times! but he don't seem to lay over other folks much now, eh? The way that corpus do be knocked about is shameful, seeing what a big man he is!' ho, ho! ugh! splutter!

"'It's a mummy!' says my dragoman, tumbling 'the thing' on end with the greatest contempt, and shoving it against the wall. 'It's Pharaoh Ammuenes III. of the twenty-fourth Dynasty'—or something of the sort—'who built this, and that, and did so and so'—cried the chuckling

voice from the further side. 'That's as you please,' grumbled my dragoman. 'I say it's a mummy.'

"'What is there we can do for you?' I asked, standing in my place, for the floor was crowded with heads and limbs of ancient heroes; at every step some bronze amulet or antique weapon rolled rattling away. There were drawings piled up, mouldy and worm-eaten; not to be kicked at peril of instant destruction. There were inscribed stones built up in heaps; painted coffins with great black eyes outstaring. The shimmer of gold came from a gigantic head, plated all over the face, and with hair upstanding fantastically. The mummy I had overthrown was gilded also; stripped it was, and fastened naked to a coffin lid. A collar of rotting beads hung round its neck, and a fillet was fast tied to its golden forehead. The scene was fantastic and somewhat horrid even to a hardened traveller. I cared not to walk over human bodies, dead this thousand years though they might be, and so stood still, and asked what we could do for this hermit whom I began to think mad.

"'Clear the window, sir,' he said earnestly. The dragoman went out, and with three cuts of his heavy sabre brought down the wreck which obscured the opening. 'Ah!' sighed the recluse in great relief. 'I can hold my own now,' he continued after a pause. 'Come nearer, sir.' With the benefit of a feeble daylight, I climbed upon the divan, and so made my way round without further mangling the dead things on the floor. No other article of furniture was there but this divan, a dirty couch enough, covered with cotton print worn into holes. In the midst of it, under the window, a ragged, rugged man was lying, with long red hair all tangled and clotted, and face scarcely to be seen for a wisp of rags about his throat. I stood hard

by, looking down at him, and he lay watching with inexpressible delight a thin, gay beam of sunshine which crept round the massy pillar without. He looked at me after a time, and said, 'Ye see, sir, they have it all their own durned way with me when the light's knocked out.'

"'Who have?' I asked.

"'Why, old Pharaoh and that lot,' he grinned, showing yellow teeth under his ragged red moustache. 'But I aren't scared for them, no, sir!' He began to chuckle again.

"'Who fastened you in?'

"'The old *sheikh*, when your boat came in sight.'

"'And why didn't you let yourself out?'

"'Let myself out?' he replied rather sulkily. 'How could I now?'

"'What's to prevent you?'

"'Oh, *you* know,' he answered, 'what's the use of playing fox—I know *you* well enough.'

"'Who am I then?'

"'You ——' he paused suddenly and looked up with suspicious gaze. Then, in a tone quite changed: 'Why didn't I let myself out, you asked, sir? Look here.'

"He began to unwind the bandages about his neck. They were stiff with old bleeding. He unwound and unwound, until at length, with a sudden wrench, he laid bare a ghastly wound, quite unhealed and neglected. 'You see, sir,' he said, 'I was sleeping propped on my hands, so as they couldn't get at my throat for to cut it. And 'twas only a reaping-hook they had at hand. Then they put a rope about me, whilst mazed like, an' tried to pull me off the roof. But my clasped hands bothered 'em still. An' I woke up at that—nigh time I did, you'll say—an' they

jumped off the *sukf*, an' vamosed. The *sheikh* an' his wife come to me then, having heard my fall, and carried me in, and set me down on this here sofy—they're sarpints, is them two, the *sheikh* and his black wife. An' so here I am, you see!'

"What on earth was any man to make out of such a story? I busied myself with putting order in the apartment, whilst the dragoman went for water and clean linen. —'Who wounded you?' I asked—'Why, who *should* it be but old Pharaoh Pthahmensepthah'—or something like that —'he an' his cousin the priest, in the corner yonder—I've found out all about 'em, ye see, an' how they behaved to young Zetes and Kalaïs when they come to these parts in the *Argo*. I mean to split on 'em, an' tell folks what dirty blackguards they was. Ye see,' he added confidentially, 'they've allers borne the best of characters, an' it kinder riles 'em to be let out on. That's about it; I don't know none more highly thought on up o' the mountains than them two. They've begged me on their knees not to let out that little story of the young princess from Thebes—he was a Memphis man, was Pthahmen, ye'll remember, an' so was his cousin. But I'm just going to do my duty, an' for that there reason they've tried a many times for to murder me. A bad lot I'm in with, sir, a durned bad lot, though well spoke of by all.' He paused a moment and thought. 'It's odd, though, that they should be always persecuting me to take up Islam, and stop my work.' The last words he spoke quite correctly, so far as grammar goes, though with a strong Yankee accent. I found afterwards that he used two tongues, one rude and vulgar, the other that of an educated man. When the mad fit got hold of him he talked like a down-east peasant, but when in sober senses

the poor fellow spoke well enough. For mad he was by times as all Hanwell. His wound, however, proved to be not serious. The intending murderers had caught him sleeping, as was his habit, on the flat roof of the *sheikh's* house. They cut at him with a reaping-hook, for so we judged on looking at the wound. His attitude in sleeping had protected the throat from this attempt, and before he could spring up they dragged him by a lasso to the parapet, which yielded and broke off, letting him fall. Thereupon the murderers ran away, doubtless supposing their victim to be dead. He had fallen soft, however, and the *sheikh* brought him in.

"In the afternoon came back a few *fellaheen* reassured by a study of my *dahbeah*. With their help we carried the recluse on board, and nursed him. I stopped ten days there, till he grew strong again, and I would willingly have carried him to Cairo, for he was harmless as could be, and a droll companion. But the hieroglyphic fanaticism held him in bonds never to be broken. He thought nothing of the outrage, attributing it generally to machinations of the Pharaoh family. I did my best to discover the criminals, but neither the American nor my dragoman would help me. The former did not evidently think it worth while, knowing what he knew, to trouble. The latter had a strong objection to take hostile proceedings against the village. He thought of future times, when the backsheesh to be had from me for supererogatory exertion, over and above his contract, should be all spent and gone, and other travellers in his charge, who knew not our poor Joseph, should demand of him fresh eggs and milk at this important stopping-place, and the *fellahs* should refuse them vengefully. With a most imperfect knowledge of Arabic,

I was quite at the man's mercy, and the affair took such a course a stranger might have thought my dragoman and me opposing authorities in the case. No one denied a resolute attempt at murder, but we made no step beyond. It matters nothing now whom we suspected. No case was made out against anyone, though the Pasha of Manfaloot was obliged to take up the matter, when I carried the news to Cairo. He used his privilege of the stick even to abuse, but with no result.

"I quitted the hermit at length with regret and uneasiness. He had bitter foes round, and most doubtful friends. That regard or pity which Moslems commonly feel for madmen of their own faith is not stretched to take in the foreigner; indeed, we exaggerate the good feeling they show towards their own people, according to my experience of Islam. The last I saw of that poor fellow, he was standing on a sand-bank by the river, his ragged turban fluttering in the wind. Awfully lonesome he looked in that strange, old-world landscape. Not for months would he see again a civilised creature, whilst murder would creep, skulking round, hour by hour, in blazing day or pitchy night. His pleasure would be to read those pictured ruins till eyes failed and judgment cracked—to measure the columns and the statues that stand like watch-towers. No pen nor pencil can suggest the look of those desecrated walls, the mystic gloom that darkens them for all their Egyptian sunlight, their dumb ponderosity, their dizzy whiteness under brilliant paint and shadowed carving. A picture will not give all the vast monotony of grandeur round, nor, above all, will it give the deathly stillness of the plain, the waves of heat that quiver down. As a white snow mantle wraps and shrouds the Arctic world, so the white sunshine

wraps and stifles all this dead land of Pharaoh. A hundred ages lie sleeping there in the bright, changeless sun, and not a sound nor rustle of life is heard. All still as under immemorial death the scene stretches out, save for that one lone figure on the sand-bank. That man I call a martyr."

"But if he was mad," said somebody, "how could he pursue his investigations?"

"He was not at all mad on that score. He has talked with me amongst the ruins as sanely as Sir Gardner Wilkinson could do.

"His published essays have been read before societies; there are many who know his name and honour it. Just as he shook off his vulgar dialect, so he shook off his madness when it came to serious conversation. There were two minds in him, as two tongues. The knowledge of Greek and Egyptian history he possessed was astonishing, and his clear-headed industry unbounded. I remember indeed that he broached a theory very disappointing to Egyptologists, but one that commended itself to me at the time, when I also had crammed a little lore in hieroglyphics. I was not then, and am much less now, in the least capable of weighing the evidence put forward in support thereof. It may be perfectly well known to *savants*, and accepted as indisputable, or proved ridiculous—I know naught of such matters. But I remember well one day we two sat beneath the painted pillars of that colossal hall of which I have spoken. Scarce bigger than children were we by comparison. The centre avenue of towering columns was dark with shade on one side, and on the other dazzling bright. Behind it on each hand stood a forest of red granite shafts, carved, painted, chequered with shadow, burning in sunlight. Not one of seven-score had fallen. A single column, displaced by

man's violence, leans upon its neighbour, and has so leant since the conquering Persian rooted it up, twenty-five centuries ago. At one end of that vista we could see a barren quarry of giant stones, with lily-obelisks outspringing from it to the ether, and a star-enamelled ceiling, slipping slowly from its joists, which roofs the holiest sanctuary of all that pious land; on those walls, so students say, is kept the record of Joseph's gift to this great temple, a boat of gold with all its gear, complete and legible to this day. At the other end, through a portal vast and deep as a hill cut through, we saw the dark-green edging of the hill, and the yellow cliffs beyond, keen and clear against an horizon dim with heat-clouds. It was in such a scene that the recluse said to me, pointing to the long lines of incised characters overhead, around, before us: 'There is a page that I can read currently. It tells this, and that, and so on. But the other, on the fallen fragment of the architrave, I can only reduce to words that mean nothing. So with that and that—I can *force* you a sense from any of them, as I could force a sense from children's gibberish; but whatever other readers, gifted with more faith, may do, I never can persuade myself to twist and torture words which should be clear as light. And what is that we get from sentences so distorted? Facts of history, notes that one can lay one's hand upon and analyse? Not a bit! If one should accept the interpretation, it must be believed that all these lines and lines of writing, these endless pages of stone, set so high and cut so firmly that time has no effect on them, are but reiterated appeals to one god or another, without point or fitness. No one who has stood where we have stood, you and I, will credit it. Home-staying learners of Egyptology may be excused for believing the

senseless translations they laboriously make out, but we cannot deceive ourselves—No, sir! After all my work, and all my discoveries, I am compelled to suppose that each high-priest could, at will, change the significance of the characters, and that it was done upon several occasions. There is, there must be, some secret mark by which the value of the symbols is determined in any one inscription. For that mark or sign I have been looking five years without success.'"

A DRAMA WITHOUT FOOTLIGHTS.

I HAVE just heard the end of a romance, of which, as it chanced, I saw the beginning five years ago. The tale is making no small stir in Nicaragua; but our communications with that distant region are not so frequent that I should fear to be forestalled by any newspaper report. The beginning of the affair I witnessed thus:—

One Sunday morning, in the course of a somewhat adventurous ride from San Juan del Norté to Matagalpa, my travelling companion and I rode into a tiny clearing which opened upon us quite unexpectedly in the deepest forest. We were working our way by compass in the absence of our guide, whose mule had fallen sick of *morina* the night before. He had gone to seek another; and, knowing that he must pass this spot in following our track, we instantly determined to halt in the glade, induced most especially to this resolution by the appearance of a hut, which stood in a little grove of plantains by the woodside. A young girl was sitting in the sunshine at the door as we came out from among the trees, but she vanished on the moment. The dwelling was rough, ruinous, weather-stained. Its walls had been built of bamboos and canes, planted half-an-inch apart, and bound

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together with rotting "vines." The coating of mud which should have covered them had partly fallen away, and flakes of it lay under the eaves. One could see through the walls as through a birdcage. Small furniture was there within. A dingy dirty den enough, the place might have looked had it stood in our pallid English landscape; but on the hot coast-line of Nicaragua, Nature will have no ugliness, let man do what he may. A bush of scarlet and purple flowers covered the roof, and a dozen yellow honey-birds were flitting from cup to cup. Beautiful plantains stretched their silky leaves all round and over it. Behind, an old dead trunk shone from crown to earth with golden blossom. The ground was carpeted with convolvulus, blue and flesh-coloured, intertwining their flowers. Their tendrils had overrun every bush and stone and sapling in the glade. One little corner the sweet potato had with difficulty preserved. The beautiful rough leaves, mottled with white and purple, were all massed and matted together to resist the encroachments of its brother parasite. Over this make-believe of a garden hung the fronds of two tree-ferns, golden plumes against the sky. The dew was scarcely yet dry upon leaf and flower. The spiders' webs and insect nests on every twig glistened like diamond nets against the sombre background of the forest, for on three sides of the dell a barricade of trees walled it round. On the other flowed a turbid river, the Bluefields, I doubt not, tawny with plunder of mud and grass and bough filched from the wild savannahs of Mosquito. The swiftness and irregularity of the current told of a rapid close below, and, listening, one could catch the cry of its wild waters.

We lit our fire for breakfast, sitting beside the stream. A weed-hung shield of rushes and dead reeds sheltered this

spot from the river chill. Soon after camping, a tall lean old Indian came striding from the forest, followed by the girl we had seen before. She went into the hut, and peeped at us, probably, from the gaping chinks ; her father came and stood beside our fire, leaning on his spear. We gave him a drink, for hospitality's sake, commended him to heaven, and paid no more attention ; for, in truth, there is but little one can say to a savage, and that little he does not always take in good part.

The father and daughter had dwelt in the spot I have described as long as either could recollect. Their nearest town, San Juan del Norté, was thirty miles away, and there was no village nearer. Sometimes a party of Caribs from Bluefields came by the lonely hut, searching the deepest woods for mahogany. Sometimes a gambler "down on his luck" would come wandering through this green wilderness, feverishly dreaming of gold mines or ancient graves lined with treasure. But neither father nor daughter asked their chance visitors for news. They didn't very well understand what was told them, you know. They were sufficient unto themselves. I don't mean that they would not have enjoyed life vastly better if they had held some intercourse with their kind. I don't mean to say that they enjoyed life at all. But they were quite unconscious of any misfortune. The old man fished mighty eels and rainbow-hued *guapoté* in the brown river. Or he wandered through the forest, looking at the trees and plants and living things with deeply observant eye. Sometimes he struck the trail of a jaguar, and sometimes, in the gloaming, his stout heart shrank to see that a red puma was dogging his homeward track. He knew where to find the yellow prize of the gambler's dream, sprinkling the river-bank

with shining grains; and sometimes, when the humour seized him, he washed an ounce or two, and laid it by in a turkey-quill. The daughter, meanwhile, sat mostly in the still sunshine by the doorway of the hut, as we saw her. By times she wove the pith of the *pinuela* into cloth or rope, or she beat the wild indigo in a hollow stone. Or again, she rolled up the soft bark of the banana into sheets. She would go with her father to the forest, and the pair would saunter on for hours, man in front, girl behind, looking and watching, but saying and doing naught. She had stood by his side with steady arrow, whilst the old man knelt to receive the jaguar's spring on his upraised spear. But mostly, Dolores preferred to sit by the door, doing nothing, and not thinking consciously, as I believe. In her ears were all the sad stilly noises of forest and water. The brown eddies gurgled and raced before her, making a ceaseless motion in the dell, and filling the air with troubled humming. Not far below, the torrent widened, breaking into shallower and rougher ground. Faint but clear in distant treble rose the angry cry of the rapid. And then, all the bright day through, there was a buzzing of countless wings, a rushing and whizzing of jewelled flies, a radiant quiver of sound and airy life from the little space of grass. The lizards rustled and chirruped; the blue jays called to one another; the jungle crow lighted on an old dead tree, and sounded his one clear note of defiance. More than these, beyond and over them all, the place was haunted by a deep low voice—the whisper of the forest. Over hundreds of miles, with never a pause, day or night, the trees passed on their tale of centuries' telling. Sometimes, whilst the sky darkened suddenly at the zenith, the voice rose to a frenzied scream. Sometimes it wailed as in a dying agony.

But never was it still. And he who sat him down and listened consciously to the ceaseless waves of sound that passed, and sighed, and died, and swelled again over that clearing, was seized with an awful horror, as though all alone and lost in the presence of a hostile world. In such a scene was this Indian girl brought up.

Fact compels me to own that Dolores was no "Lucy of the Dove;" she had, however, no particular instincts of evil; but then, she had none of good. In her solitary childhood, daily exposed to danger, the Indian girl had gathered qualities more useful, if not more charming, than the accustomed attributes of young ladies. What were these, her future tale will tell. My personal acquaintance with the heroine began and ended with that day.

We were lying on the river-bank, well to windward of the cockroaches which stuffed the hut. I was watching the behaviour of three big ants, evidently belonging to the "dangerous classes," who were engaged in highway robbery upon their smaller brethren, returning from a foray on some sweet-leaved bush. The light clank of a paddle caused us to look through the dry reeds. A canoe was gliding towards our bank, bearing two men, who still panted after their late exertions in the rapid. "Stop her!" muttered the man in front, "we're to home." His companion, a negro, drew his paddle in, and the foremost seized a handful of reeds to pull himself ashore. As he prepared to jump out, the negro took him by the dangling fringe of his dirty waist scarf, and exclaimed, in English: "Now, mind me, d'ye h'ar, Edwards? None o' yer Yankee tricks, now, d'ye h'ar? So be the gal does what she oughter, why it's share an' share down o' this har' bank, an' nowheres else. D'ye mind me?" The other fellow growled a hasty "All right,"

and leaped ashore. In two steps he was between Jack and me, staring in wildest astonishment at our fire and ourselves. I had already recognised him as a well-known character in Greytown, a brawny loose-limbed fellow, with dark features, by no means so ill-formed as is usual with his mixed race. For José Bermudez, alias Edwards, was a zambo by birth—half Carib, half Indian. By character and repute he was a desperate fellow, gambler, fighting man, strongly suspected of murder, and vehemently accused of highway robbery. Both sides of his family disowned him at birth, and thrust the child from amongst them. In this fact lay the only plea even our much-and-long-excusing friends of Greytown could advance for Edwards. They said, "his people didn't kinder seem to cotton to him," and so he was held almost absolved from blame for larceny and homicide. The negro I did not know at all, but he had an evil face.

Although the words we had overheard were vague as well could be, the reputation of this man caused to both Jack and me some slight uneasiness, meeting him in such a very lonely place. "It's not a lively trail you're on, Edwards," I said, "this time. No euker or monté up here I should say!"

"And no fat alcaldes of Nindiri to frighten out of their moneybags," laughed reckless Jack, alluding to the latest scandal about our visitor.

Before he replied, or seemed to have recovered his composure, the negro slipped up the bank behind him: "He's so mortal shamefaced, is this Edwards, he can't answer a white gen'man, he can't. Hi! Edwards, tell these 'ere durned old meddlesome Marys as ye've come for to see yer sweetheart, and——" perish their eyesight, in short. The sudden

flash of Jack's revolver, and the whiz of a bullet humorously aimed above the ruffian's head, sent him precipitately flying, with all a negro's awkwardness, to the other side of the clearing. The noise brought out our host from some shadowy place of espial, and also his daughter, whom I had scarcely yet seen.

Dolores—we didn't know her name then—no sooner caught sight of Edwards than she darted to his arms, hugged him, forgetting all her shyness, laughed and cried, and crooned over him. The man submitted, with fairly good grace, to a welcome which we travellers heartily envied. Our forest beauty was charming in her own wild style. Irregular features and unkempt hair were more than compensated by brilliancy of eyes and teeth, and delicate symmetry of form. She soon became aware of our admiring gaze, and, with an angry toss of the head, she took away her lover into the hut. Almost at the same moment, our *mozo* came riding out from the forest in pursuit of us. He apparently knew the Indian hermit, for his loud shouts of "John!" were answered with a cordiality that almost took the shape of words.

"John," the lank old savage, leaned his everlasting spear against the house-wall, and even bore a hand in removing our guide's *alforgas*; the latter, meanwhile, merrily quizzing him about certain "placers" and secret claims of gold, whereof he declared the old fellow to have the monopoly. John said nothing, but chuckled silently over witticisms of which we could scarcely understand a word, so mixed was the *patois*. Edwards' companion, however, did not seem to be so ill informed in the matter of dialects. He pressed his villainous black head between the pair, and grinned, and listened, with now and then an encouraging word to stimu-

late the old man's loquacity. But not a word did the Indian speak, and his gossip, our *mozo*, seemed no way surprised. As he afterwards told us, John could understand but not talk the broken Spanish of Mosquito.

After awhile, the negro gave up his attempt to make conversation general, and strode sullenly across to the hut-door, which he opened without ceremony. Edwards came out, and the two walked round to the plantain-patch, both talking with heat and vehemence. The negro broke away twice, with the angriest gestures; at length, with his black face gray and ashy, his eyes ablaze, his big mouth twisting with curses, he rushed past our fire, jumped into the boat, and pushed off; then a flash and a loud report came from the river. We heard a cry, but waited not to see who was hurt. Snatching our arms, we rushed along the bank. But the bushes and tangled convolvulus stayed our course. The *mozo*, under guidance of old John, outstripped us. The thunderous rattle of his old blunderbuss, loaded, I know, with two handfuls of buckshot, or thereabouts, made the ancient woods re-echo. We came up with our guide about 300 yards below. It was just the head of the rapid. Ramon was standing quiet under a redwood tree, with John beside him, leaning on his spear. There was something of an awe-struck look upon their faces. We pushed through to share the sight they were watching with such deep emotion.

Ah! It was a dreadful spectacle. Before us ran the wild water, leaping in torment down the slope. Its tawny surface bore a mane of tossing foam. The scud of those furious downward waves hung on the air, and dankly blew upon our faces. A lofty rock in midmost stream quivered from the roots, bowing its verdant crest under the beat and

struggle of the downfall. Around its base stood a watery wall, shrieking, beaten back, leaping from side to side. Here the upbent limb of a tree, submerged, threw high a jet of foam, warning a man of death before his course. There, with a threat as terrible, the broken eddies poured into a hollow rock, and boiled and whizzed around therein with furious clamour. No passage could be traced amidst the seamed and surging currents, save just beneath our standing-place. The air was full of flying rift, the forest trees shook, the innermost arcades re-echoed with the screams and roaring of the maddened water.

Before us, dashing headlong down on that resistless current, swept the canoe. The negro stood upright therein, swaying to and fro. His dry, white mouth was open. We could see he was shouting, and no word reached us! Scarce ten yards away, a human being rolled to destruction, and we stood by helpless. Such eyes they were that glared at us! I try not to describe them. Fury and fear and prayer were mingled in their fearful glance. In his right hand was a fragment of a paddle. Ah! how pitilessly he was swept down! Our faces turned white, though the suspense was but an instant long. The canoe gave a heavy lilt, righted, and dashed off in another course, her gunwale under water. The man sank to his knees, and then, as in haste to shut the horror of the sight from his own eyes, he threw himself along the bottom. We saw him no more. The frail craft struck some hidden rock or branch, leaped up, and then plunged deeply downwards. We saw it, or part of it, rolling and tossing, wet and glistening in the sunshine, fifty yards below; and then no more.

The four of us turned away, and silently retraced our

steps. "I'd rather," said the *mozo*, "have killed ten men outright, than struck the poor wretch's paddle from his hand. He was a murderer and a thief, but I'll pay a gold ounce in masses for his soul, when we get safely back to Leon." But our poor *mozo* never did get back.

It was Edwards who had suffered from the negro's treacherous shot. Dolores was found binding up a flesh-wound in his arm. The wrath of the girl was a sight to see. It seemed scarcely soothed in hearing how quick had followed retribution on the crime. Edwards said little in answer to our questions. It was with but a sulky-looking sort of gratitude that he took his mistress's aid. We soon gave up inquiring into the mystery—men are killed every day in Nicaragua, and neither they nor any other know the wherefore. Old John seemed much more interested in certain mathematical calculations than in his daughter's love or her hero's safety. He had paid no attention to Edwards on his arrival, and did not now glance at his wound. A walk from the river bank to the hut, and deep reflection in different attitudes and spots, appeared to find the old fellow much more entertainment. At length he took the *mozo* aside, and, for the first time, opened his lips to speak. We did not understand on what subject the pair conversed so long and earnestly. Our man seemed at first to disbelieve, almost to laugh at his old friend's remarks. But after a time he also began to survey the ground, under silent guidance of his friend, and to meditate in odd corners. On the upshot, whilst we saddled our horses and collected traps, the *mozo* suddenly went up to Edwards, who was sitting by the hut door, and exchanged a few sharp words with him. Soon afterwards we mounted and rode away, impatient to have an explanation of these proceedings.

Ramon, however, had but little to give, it seemed, when we filed off beneath the curtain of boughs.

"All I can tell you is," said he, "that the shot which struck the zambo was meant for me. Why it was so meant, I cannot think. Had it been Edwards, now, that fired——" He broke off.

We told him what curious words the negro had used in landing. He listened with great attention, and reflected long. It was not till camping-time—how well I recollect that camp, beneath a cliff all thick with small mahogany trees and hill-bamboo!—that Ramon gave us the result of his cogitations.

"I think, gentlemen," he said, then, pausing with his hand upon the saddle, "that we've had, this day, a narrow escape of all our lives." When supper was over, and the tobacco store brought out, he gave us his interpretation of the day's adventure. "I didn't wish you to pass old John's clearing," he said; "it don't matter why, but I didn't wish to go there. I mention this to explain why you came on the place unexpectedly. Old John has been a friend of mine these thirty years. I've known his daughter since she was a baby."

He told us all about their manner of life, which I have elsewhere related, and went on:

"For all the poverty of their belongings, these two people are rich—aye, very rich! Old John has just as much gold at his command as he pleases to seek out and store away. He knows a hundred washings. This man Edwards, who has somehow witched away the love of a girl too good for a zambo's master, has always been hankering and prying after the old man's store. He came here to-day with this black nigger, who has about the worst

character in Greytown—and the Lord he knows that's saying a deal!—resolved to settle matters somehow; that's how I read it. You see, John will never have him for a son-in-law, and the girl won't leave her father. The plot of these two fellows, as I think, was something like this. One more try they meant to make—not the first by a many—to entice the girl to steal her father's gold, which the old man would never have missed, most like. If she held out, they meant to murder the father, take the dust, and carry off little Dolores, to get from her the secret of the "washings." Your arrival put them out a little, but not much. You're only travellers, and strangers at that. If you knew crime had been done, and knew the guilty, you could only set the police and lawyers to work. I'm different. I live here, and travel back and forward. The people of the forest know me. If harm came to John, I'd raise the Indians and the Caribs to find his murderer. There's neither wood nor water as could hold him. That's why the nigger tried to shoot me. Perhaps they'd have tried to trap you next—perhaps would have waited till you should clear off. Thus I read the signs of the trail."

So we went on our way, and passed from the country, seeing no more of old John and his daughter. The rest of their story has come to me by letter from my former companion in travel.

The negro didn't die! Wounded, bruised, and half-dead, he was thrown up at the tail of the rapid. Keeping the life in him by roots and nauseous food, he crept along until discovered by some Caribs searching for india-rubber. Three months after we left the country, our *mozo*, Ramon, was murdered on the San Juan river, passing up to Leon. Within a week from that time, Edwards was seized, whilst

at work, by a recruiting-party of rebels, and carried up towards the Lake Nicaragua, handcuffed, and his back raw with cowhiding; this is what is called the conscription by the humorous natives of the land. He found means to tell his fate to Dolores, whom indeed the scoundrel appears to have loved, in a brutal fashion. He attributed his capture to the denunciation of the negro, who was named, it seems, Pepe Calhajas. When one speaks of denunciation in such a case, nothing more is meant than a quiet hint to the sergeant of the guard that such and such a healthy young fellow will be found working or strolling, beyond the reach of assistance, at such an hour. When Dolores heard her lover's fate, she did not hesitate a moment. Taking a few furs and other treasures in the canoe, she dropped down the river to Greytown, sold them there, and equipped herself in handsome country clothes, of the masculine gender, out of the proceeds. A *bongo*, bound Grenada way, gave her a lift to Castillo Viejo, where, it appears, she found Colonel Don Juan Zacosta, who enlisted her in the army of the rebels, under a promise to place her in the same company as her "brother" Bermudez, *alias* Edwards. A message from Castillo easily brought Pepe beyond the safe boundaries of Greytown. He also was kidnapped by Zacosta's men, forewarned by Dolores, and thus these three persons were again brought together.

Meantime, the sex of the girl had been discovered, and Zacosta seems to have persecuted her with his attentions. There is no talk of turning the false soldier away; but this is quite explained by the custom of the country, even had we not some hints about an unpaid bounty. However it be, Dolores had no hesitation in demanding the fulfilment of his promise from Colonel Zacosta. This gentleman may

have been glad to escape that little difficulty about the bounty, or, as scandal says, he may have been too glad to get rid of such fiery virtue among his Amazons. Anyway, he drafted off Dolores into the company of Captain Irrabel, then in the field before Managua. Here she found Edwards plundering, fighting, and roystering in his finest style. They fought and looted together. Dolores' sex was perfectly well known, both in camp and city, but no one troubled about it. At length their story reached the ears of a young French priest whom I had seen traversing the country with hands outspread and a comic horror in his eyes, viewing the wondrous uncivilisation of these poor Christian peoples. He persuaded the pair, without any reluctance on either side, to get married. They had some money saved from this merry life of loot—needless to say that in three years of service they had had but six months' pay!—and so they purchased their discharge, and went roystering back towards San Juan del Norté. In justice, I must qualify this word "roystering," which my friend uses to describe the life of Dolores. He probably does not mean that she had led a dissipated, much less a loose life. She only flaunted about in dresses more fine than words could tell, and jewellery as big as soup-plates dangling. Her husband led no such innocent life, but he was mightily afraid of the silent, fearless girl, so lightly wooed.

Though extravagance in Nicaragua is limited by the possibilities of things in most matters, in gambling there is a resource which never fails the spendthrift. No village so small or so poor that a little gold cannot be ticed out for the monté board. I should not like to say an unjust thing of the dead, but Edwards had cause to complain of scandal if

he really did not know better than most men the secrets of winning. But he played too high for his "gallery," no uncommon extravagance. The result was, when winning he won little, though it were all the players had; when losing, he lost sums fabulous for these tiny settlements. So it came about that after six months of riotous living these prodigal children were reduced to the husks again. And just at this time Pepe, the negro, who had also thriven at war, came home again and talked of retiring to the islands. His apparent wealth stirred bitter feelings in Dolores' husband, who had fooled away more money than the negro ever boasted. Pepe refused the pair all assistance, whilst taking out Edwards every night from drinking-bar to card-saloon. Dolores lived no one knew how, but not better nor worse than thousands of families in that thriftless generous tropic land. Her clothes were worn and faded, her hut was a birdcage of bamboos and canes; but to such details she was mighty indifferent. Plantains and cocoa-nuts and sweet herbs were to be had for the gathering. The code of legal right and abstract morality perhaps forbids the taking of other persons' fruit; but who can place a value, except for the guileless stranger, upon half a hundred plantains or a score of cocoa-nuts in Nicaragua? On such fruit, and the fish she speared in the lagoon, and small game snared along the forest edge, this pair of idle barbarians lived in contentment not to be despised for a month or more. They might have gone on so for an indefinite time. I do not suppose that Dolores was much less happy now than in the days she lived with her father. Perhaps she was storing up a list of grievances against her savage husband; but I have no authority for thinking so, save my experience of the

Indian character. The report by the Greytown police upon her conduct describes it to have been singularly quiet and decorous.

But in the meanwhile Pepe and Edwards were laying their heads together. The fame of old John and of his secret washings had spread widely. It had grown to be a sort of legend amongst the stay-at-home shopkeepers and loafers of the coast. They multiplied his wealth, and glorified that tumbledown hut between tawny river and grey forest, until the credulous stranger might have thought that Monte Christo had retired to these parts, grotto and all. But there was scarcely a soul knew where the Indian lived. His visitors had been Carib cutters, wild Ramas and Kingmen, or sickly gamblers, who perished in the forest. He had not been secure so long, for all the dread of his savage protectors, had some of the desperate rowdies of the coast known where to find him. And so these wild and foolish stories circulated. Edwards must have known how absurd they were; but his brain, heated with drink and inflamed with envy, could not resist their fascination. Pepe was always urging him to force from his wife, by the cruelest means, her knowledge of the places whence John got his dust. Dolores had sworn again and again that she was not in the secret, but the ruffians did not trust the solemnest oaths. With prescient resolution, also, she had refused to visit her father to beg money from him. Several times she was heard to say that evil would come of the journey. She declared herself perfectly content with her position, and doubtless she was so.

There was a lady, wife of an American official of the Transit Company, who had shown some kindness to this half-wild girl. To her one night Dolores came, earnestly

begging the loan of her husband's rifle. Fire-arms are not among the trifles of which a man, or a woman either, readily divests himself in Nicaragua. The prayer was refused. Without any signs of passion the girl went away. About a week afterwards it was discovered, somewhat late, that a musket and sword-bayonet had been abstracted from the Presidio. Inquiries made drew out the visit of Dolores to Mrs. ——, and it was then discovered that her hut had been empty about a week or more. Attention thus called, it was soon noticed that Edwards had not been seen for about the same time. Then the negro Pepe was found missing. Edwards's canoe had also disappeared from its mooring-place. And the worthy people of Greytown, laying their suspicious heads together, arrived at one conclusion simultaneously, "That thar' old John is in a mighty tight place, wharever he be, darn my boots!"

But there were some among them determined to see more closely into the matter when a fellow-creature's life was at stake. A sum of twenty dollars was subscribed, and two stout fellows, remnants of Walker's filibustering army, shouldered their rifles to take the forest. A short search brought to light two woodsmen, a Rama Indian and a Carib, each of whom could lead the explorers in a bee-line to old John's clearing, thirty miles away. When these good fellows had with difficulty been persuaded that no harm was meant, but rather good, to their *compadre*, they cheerfully consented to serve as guides. And so the four set out.

It was not with any overpowering anxiety that the population of Greytown awaited news; I am bound to confess that. The vast majority were inclined to think that "a darned foolish fuss was making over a bald-headed old cuss of an Ind'an." The explorers were away

much longer than had been expected. When they at length appeared it was towards evening. They had gone away by land, but they returned by water. I can well fancy the scene: red and yellow and purple blaze of sky above; bright green grass, such as only Greytown shows in all the tropic zone, skirting the low river; palm-trees and rhododendrons on its bank. The canoe pushes slowly and strongly through water-plants so thick-matted that the sheen of the radiant sky is scarce reflected in the stream. Great leaves of lily go down before the boat. The madder-crested spurwings flutter their gold pinions before it in alarm. The long purple flowers of the water-daisy sway over the side, and drop their petals on the paddler's knee. A thousand blossoms of every colour are crushed as the canoe creeps on to the spot where a shouting curious crowd is waiting to receive its passengers, amongst the guava-orchard by the American factory.

They were five, three living, and one dead, and one seemingly unconscious. The noisy greetings of the crowd were hushed, as the brawny filibusters lifted a long discoloured bundle from before the feet of Dolores. They carried it ashore; she rose to follow. The Rama put his sturdy arm beneath, and lifted her to land. No one spoke. There was the consciousness of some dreadful tragedy in every heart. A few of the Americans present pushed up to Saunders and his comrade, who stood, one at foot and one at head of the rag-swathed corpse. "Old Ind'an John," they whispered low, "murdered in the woods."

"And them as did the deed, whar' are they?" was the fierce answering whisper.

"Hush, hold on!" replied the explorers, with a significant gesture towards Dolores.

They went on to the church in that order, and pushed aside the mat, and laid the body before the altar. Every soul in Greytown had assembled by this time. The truth had leaked out: "Edwards an' Black Pepe had the poor old cuss down, a-torturing him, an' the *muchacha* she come up an' killed 'em both. An' she shall take no harm for it neither, so long's there's six-shooters in Greytown!" The sympathy of the crowd was entirely with Dolores. But the fussy mulatto governor came hurrying up, and the fat cura in his wine-stained cassock, and the ragged commandante with his garrison of barefoot soldiers. The first demanded pens and paper. He commenced by ordering all the party into arrest, and launched a warrant to the circumambient air against the Carib who had gone home. The second demanded the baptismal certificate of this Indian they had laid before *his* altar, and stamped and fumed in an agony of ridiculous fanaticism. The third did neither more nor less than incontinently take Dolores into custody for stealing a musket from the Presidio. It needed all the efforts of the influential persons to avert a riot. In the end Dolores was marched off to jail, charged with the murder of her husband and Pepe, and on a second count with the theft of government property.

The evidence against her, when the trial came on, was that of the two Americans, and some words dropped by herself and her father, who did not die until just before the party reached Greytown on their return. The filibusters deposed, that on nearing the Indian's hut they had found tracks, scarce two hours old, in front of them. These proved to have been those of Dolores, who had been delayed nearly eight days on the road by a dreadful sprain. Just as they were entering the glade they heard a shot, and

then another, followed by cries and groans. Running on, they discovered Dolores engaged in combat with Pepe, who was shot through the body. Before they could take any part in it, the girl had beaten her enemy down, and struck the life from him. In falling, he disclosed to the newcomers' eyes the body of Edwards, killed by a bullet in the brain. But the groaning did not cease when Pepe became silent; for, as they approached, a dreadful sight was discovered. Between the bodies of Pepe and Edwards, stretched on his back, and all covered with ghastly wounds, lay old Indian John. His persecutors had been with him nearly twenty-four hours. They had travelled by water.

It is not surely needful to trace a self-evident tale any further. Dolores was detained long in prison, in the hope, so scandal whispered, of drawing from her the secret of her father's wealth. But the Indian girl's tragic story had attracted too great attention for excessive delay. She was tried at Granada, and triumphantly acquitted. Nevertheless, with that laughable regard for logic which so often characterises French or Spanish law proceedings, the prisoner was found guilty of stealing a musket, and condemned to pay two dollars' fine and the value thereof. The money was forthcoming from a hundred hands, and Dolores herself had a choice of homes. She is now in the family of a rich *haciendero* near Leon. Man has forgiven her, and we may even hope that Heaven will be yet more merciful!

ALLIGATORS.

AMONGST those experiences which every traveller ought to have on hand, but which I have not, one of the most curious concerns the alligator. It is admitted as a fact, proved by evidence and experience, that alligators bellow. Understand that I am not at all disputing the truth of this belief when I say that I never heard one; it is but another instance of my ill-luck. Fifteen years ago I remembered much better than now the passage, not deficient in rude vigour, wherein Waterton describes the terrible sound which woke him up at night. The sensation he enjoyed I longed to experience, but neither *timsah* nor *buaya*, neither crocodile of Egypt nor its Malayan representative, would gratify my curiosity. I travelled on to America, and saw the crested saurians lying on the river bank like lumberers' logs in spring. I saw them in the Lake Nicaragua, streaking the surface so thickly that their sides ground against each other as they floated. Three hundred have I counted in one small bay. But of all the host not one to bellow! My listening was in vain. Strange sounds arise at night in these still forests—sounds beyond explanation, that cause the Indian to start and cross himself, and mutter charms his priest has taught him; but never did I

hear mysterious noises attributed to the alligator. In those lands, a cry out of the common is put to the account of "Carib devils," that is, old Indian gods dispossessed—or else to Congo baboons.

No words, indeed, could exaggerate the ferocity of the congo's howl. Look at him on the bough yonder, a shaggy, shapeless lump. His hands move in a slow gesture of nervousness, but he is too stupid to run away. Could any creature be more ridiculous? But hark! Over the hill comes a sudden roar, distant but terrible. The traveller unprepared starts with amazement. Yon rough pack of wool thrills to the sound, gulps in a mighty breath, and thunders his response. One listens, discrediting one's eyes. It cannot be that little ugly thing up aloft, lolling lumpishly upon a branch, whose voice growls and rumbles through the forest, like that of some monstrous survivor of the Flood! With such awful mutterings the plesiosaurus wallowed from his lair—with such ringing screams swooped the pterodactyl on his prey! But they are dead, with all their generation, and those voices which terror-struck the elder world are counterfeited now by yon poor silly beast. If it be the congo's purpose in creation to inspire a nameless, formless terror amongst strangers, he admirably fulfils the design; but if there were any other object in view, it eludes inquiry.

The first time I had any sport worth naming with alligators was in the Rio Colorado, a channel of the San Juan delta, in Mosquito. The main stream had just undergone one of those periodical dammings which have now entirely closed it to navigation. The people of Greytown, in despair, were discussing the prospect of opening the Colorado branch, and I reached the settlement just in time

to join an exploring party. Two hours' steaming along the coast, in a vessel of the Transit Company, now defunct, brought us to the Colorado mouth, where we found a bar, as ill-omened, though not yet so shallow, as that of the main channel. Any hopes entertained by the company were thus dispelled, but we went on up the river. The alligators lay in ranks upon the mud, so overshadowed by foliage that from the land side we might have stumbled over them, and from the river one might have landed on their backs. Not for the purpose of basking had they come out, for never a sun-ray could warm their hides under that canopy. Rowing slowly and carefully along the bank, after the steamer had come to her moorings, we could see now and then a swell circle out from beneath the bushes, warning us of a victim escaped; but most of them dived noiselessly before we got near. In such a neighbourhood, however, patience was sure to succeed; some monster, more gorged perhaps than another, or deaf, or in love, would allow us to come within shot. After noticing fifty escapes in ten minutes, we espied just such a lingerer. He was stretched on a grey tongue of land, raised a little above the stream. A great grooved track in the mud, bordered by sprawling handprints on each side, led from the water. The little bank was all torn down by his climbing claws. On the top of it, lying along, we could see the brute like a dirty barrel rolled over. Head and tail were hidden by leaves, a drooping branch half masked his shoulder, and an anxious time was that whilst our men pulled cautiously up to round it. At the first glimpse of the soft skin which covers an alligator's heart, Captain Gregory, the manager of the Transit Company, threw up his rifle and fired. My good friend—to whom I wish a

thousand regards if he be still living—rarely wasted a shot. The great tub of flesh bounded from all four feet at once, twice his own height, I should think, then dropped again with a "squelch" plainly audible, falling partly over the mound's edge. Amongst the *mêlée* of flying mud, splashed water, and sticks springing up, Gregory put in another bullet which brought peace to the monster's breast, though his great tail continued to flap in terrific circles for five minutes longer. Body and legs lay still in death, rigid, but a vengeful life possessed the tail. It described a circle, complete to a few degrees, sweeping with awful force from side to side. A shower of mud fell twenty yards away. When these alarming gyrations ceased, we landed to inspect the wretch and to cut a steak. Gregory's excellent shots had both proved mortal, entering not two inches apart. On the prairies of Texas he had learned to shoot for his life, and in the civil war just finished—— but we didn't talk much of those memories at Greytown in my day. According to custom, the alligator's tail was cut off for a trophy, and the steak we sliced from the root thereof in butcherly fashion. This fellow measured between ten and eleven feet. An overpowering smell of musk issued from his body.

The next shot, evidently successful, fell to me. Rounding a corner, we saw an alligator swimming pleasantly across. When on no business bent, the creature paddles along smoothly, with all his snout above water, as far back as the "false eye." More than a third of his length thus lies visible, but so flat is his head, that the height above water is nowhere more than three or four inches. The mark to aim at is therefore but small, for only in the eye or the depression behind will your ball take effect on the upper

surface. Alligators afloat are very wary, and the best rifle bullet will glance off at a certain distance, unless it strikes a vital part. My shot caused a violent plunge, a splashing and pounding of the water. In the midst thereof the alligator sank; but the next moment a great paw, outstretched, rose from the surface, quivered, and slowly rolled over. I don't think that saurian disturbed the fish again.

At camp the same evening we tried the steak. It was beautiful to look at, whiter than any veal, and sweetly browned. But I'd as soon try to eat an old saddle stuffed with musk.

Nowhere in my travels have I visited a country where alligators are a serious subject of alarm. As with tigers, so with these animals, the man-eater is rare; but when he has once tasted human flesh, an alligator takes fondly to the food. At Lingga Fort, on the Batang Lupar river of Borneo, the present Rajah of Sarawak showed me the heads of five great brutes, which had displayed man-eating propensities at one time or another. When it becomes known that such a monster is about, all the Dyaks turn out to capture it, nor do they rest until they have succeeded. The guilty reptile is identified by the *manangs* or medicine-men, who rarely, I am told, make a mistake. All these five heads were remarkably large, and their teeth showed age. By these signs, perhaps, the *manangs* are guided. The crocodiles of Borneo are the finest and best-coloured of those I have seen. They do not appear to lose their mottling of green and dirty-white on growing old. The alligators of America are of the colour of mud.

Alligators, apparently, are not fond of a flood. In very rainy weather they crawl ashore by night, and even enter villages. I forget whether it was at La Vergen or San

Juan del Sur that a young official of the Transit Company had an alarming adventure during our stay there. It was a wet and stormy night, and the residents on that lonely station—lonely, whether La Vergen or San Juan—had been keeping up their spirits with song and drink. The time to separate came at last. Our young friend bade his hosts good night, and set forth in the rain. Scarcely had he left, when a spluttering sound was heard, a crash, a shout, and back came the youth, bleeding all over, and swearing. "What the —— have you put a log across the road for?" he cried; "I've fallen over it into a thorn bush, and there's more'n a sample of splinters in my carcass. Darn your jokes, I say!" The host assured his friend that the path was clear, and words soon grew high, for tempers rise quickly in Nicaragua, from incessant provocation. At length lights were called for, others visited the scene, when a monstrous alligator was found stretched across the road. The glare probably alarmed him, for when the roysterers came hurrying back with axes and rifles, he was nowhere to be seen. But it was many months before that youth recovered his fall amongst the bushes.

Alligators are found in Central America wherever there is enough water to cover them. When one pool fails, they wander down the channel seeking another. How these creatures find a living in such small streams as they often frequent I do not know. Walking through the forest near Juigalpa, in Chontales, I once met an alligator changing quarters. On dry ground and in the daylight there was no danger to fear from him, and we crouched behind a boulder to watch his progress. He may have been eight feet long. Wriggling though his walk, the creature made fair progress, the great body lumbering

from side to side, and the hideous head rolling with each clumsy motion of his limbs. His armour was masked with grey mud, caked and crackling. The stream had been long dry, and in its bed sprang reeds, and canes, and graceful foliage, nameless to me. With hideous swiftness he rolled through these weak barriers, crushing them under foot. We drew aside to see how he would clear the boulder. Straight on the brute went. Reaching the stone, he rested his chin upon a ledge, stretched out one great, spread paw, found hold, and ponderously raised his head. Then the jagged ridge of the back arched itself, the clutching arms grasped the boulder's edge, and the death-like glimmering eyes peered over it. We had no rifle with us, and we let him crawl lumbering away.

I have never myself seen an alligator which I could declare to be more than twelve feet long; I have never killed one, or seen one killed, even of that length. But doubtless they grow much larger. If it be correct to calculate the head at one-third of the creature's length, a dozen of monstrous proportions may often be seen at once in Lake Nicaragua.

But to return to the theme with which I started. Never once have I heard one bellow, whether large or small. A sort of whistle I have heard from small fellows in confinement; but the terrible sound to which so many travellers assert they have listened with awe at midnight, is one of those sensations which I have yet to experience.

THE RAJAH'S DIAMOND.

WHEN I left the diamond-fields, my friend Bate owned one of the best claims in Number Three Road, New Rush. He had rank among those happy ones who kept a pint measure of big gems in their tent. These he would display from time to time, smoothing out the brilliant heap upon his table. Ruefully he displayed them, remembering what fine prices he had refused for the very worst in days of pride, before the panic. At the sum now offered, Bate declined with unnecessary emphasis to sell, and he was fond of consulting me, as a man who had travelled east and west beyond "the market," as to places where would be found a good opening for trifles of the sort.

"About India, now, for that chap?" he would say, holding up a great "macle" stone, like a crystal inkstand. "Or China for the yellow boy? Or Mexico, Borneo, Timbuctoo?" I advised him to sell for what prices he could obtain, or, if not, to rely only on the Indian market. The first counsel he would not hear of; the second he put in practice, when he had made his fortune, and had enjoyed a winter's hunting in the Shires. Persons who connect themselves with diamonds, early learn to hold their tongues, and I have no information as to Bate's success in disposing of his

treasures to Maharajah and Ranee, but I fancy it to have been satisfactory. He did not succeed, however, in clearing out his stock, and wandered farther East, towards China. We had often talked of Borneo, and on reaching Singapore it occurred to him to run over to Kuching. There is now an hotel in that secluded capital, and the residents showed their usual hospitality. At the end of three days an incident happened to him, which has happened to all other strangers on that coast who presented the appearance of wealth.

One day, as he left the Treasury, where he had been calling, two Malays rose from beside the little bridge which spans the ditch—a lovely ditch, as I remember it, bordered with pink lotus, overhung by scarlet garlands of the shoe-flower, and studded with velvety rosettes of pistia. They went up to him at once and salaamed. He stood to talk, having naught else to do, in the pathway leading to the Court House. One Malay was evidently of some rank. He wore shirt, sarong, and trousers of silk, rather frayed; his turban was of Persian cloth, and the kris, thrust in his girdle, had gold ornaments about the hilt. The other seemed to be a servant and interpreter. This latter spoke whilst his comrade raised his hands gracefully from time to time in acquiescence and deprecation. The first words made Bate laugh, for the interpreter wished to know if he would buy a diamond? Such a form of salutation the digger had been hearing every hour for twelve months of his own life, on the other side the world. "I'd rather sell you one," said he, "but let's look at it." Formula again.

The diamond, however, was not to be seen, except on certain terms for which Bate's experience gave no parallel. A sum, which proved to be no less than 30,000 dollars, must

be lodged beforehand with the manager of the Borneo Company at Kuching, and it must be lodged in cash. No paper would do. "And what then?" asked Bate, laughing. Then, it appeared, the gem might be brought for inspection. It lay a long way off, and there were many dangers to encounter.

The romance of the thing began to interest my friend. In his experience, diamonds had been the most prosaic things possible, always bearing with them something of that dull earth in which they are discovered. He asked a number of questions, to which the answers came straight enough. Not a sixpence need be disbursed, until the stone should actually lie in his own hands. The size of it, as near as Bate could judge, would come to close on 1,000 carats. White, it professed to be, as the Star of South Africa, cut, or rather polished in the native style. It belonged to a rajah, and had lain in his family for generations.

Up to this nothing had happened other than I or any Bornean traveller could have predicted. Those Malays have made the same proposal to every visitor for twenty years. They are perfectly well known in Sarawak, as Bate discovered, and as you may if you look over any work of travels on that country. The new feature of the story was Bate's conduct. He didn't laugh or turn away scornful, but invited them to the hotel next day, resolving meanwhile to take advice.

The advice he got was the same given to others in like case. All in Sarawak, or indeed out of it, believe in the diamond; you will find a description of it, drawn on the mere credit of these emissaries, in the first book on precious stones coming under your hand. For 200 years, ever since

the Dutch first landed in Borneo, it has been talked of and sought after, but never seen by white man. For, unless the traveller can lodge £7,500 in cash with the Borneo Company, no chance has he of beholding the treasure. Even Rajah Brooke's "paper," backed by the Company's guarantee, was respectfully refused, and he broke off in anger—to his great regret afterwards, as he confessed. Bate had not £7,500 in dollars, more than you or I, at a moment's notice. He explained to the Malays, on their visit, that gentlemen travelling don't usually carry such a sum with them. "But," said he, "if you won't bring the diamond here, will you take me to the diamond?" This proposal startled them. They looked at each other, conferred eagerly, and made an appointment for next day. Bate took counsel again on this original idea. His acquaintances were unanimous that no danger of an ordinary sort could be feared in the adventure—no murder, nor robbery, nor wild beasts, for the belief had always prevailed that this rajah dwelt over the Sambas frontier, in Dutch territory, where also security is profound. But this might be error, and if his guides should lead him into the Sultan of Bruni's dominion, Heaven help the traveller! But Bate was not daunted. The Malays agreed to take him, and he set out with delight.

So much of the following tale I can guarantee as if I had been present at the incidents, just as you might guarantee that if a man lived three days in Rome somebody in the street would offer him a coin of Heliogobalus for sale.

With the two guides and a Kuching boy, lent to him, Bate set off up the Sarawak river. The stream appears to have been high, for they could follow its course two days.

Water then failed, and the canoe was left at a Dyak house. By the suggestion of friends in the capital—where everyone felt deeply interested about his adventure—an ample store of tinned meats had been prepared, and there was other luggage, arms, &c. More servants than the boy S'Ali had been strongly objected to by the Malays, nor did they look on him with approval. Bate wondered how his stores were to be carried, but in an hour's time four sturdy little Dyaks came to be loaded up. The Englishman, cramped by two days' sitting in a canoe, which had also been his bed at night, would gladly have rested in the big Dyak houses. He describes them as much more comfortable, and much better furnished than I remember. But his resolution at starting had been to put himself wholly under his guides' advice, and the diamond-fields are no bad school for teaching a man to bear discomfort. So they set off, though the sun was already low, upon a "batang path," such as he found all through his journey. This is a style of road-making peculiar to Borneo. When the Dyaks find communication needful between one point and another, they fell young trees in a straight line, lop off the crowns, and painfully hoist them upon tressels. Over stream and dell the timber track is carried, with never a handrail to grasp. The Dyak will stay to chaff a friend or to choose a tempting bit of penang from his box, poised fifty feet above a raging torrent. Bate followed his guides gallantly, balancing himself with a rope which they stretched across the more dangerous parts.

At sunset another village was reached, when Bate was invited to pay the little coolies one shilling each, whereupon they went their way. Here also the Malays had evidently an acquaintance, shaking hands with the chief inhabitants

after that English manner which is travelling round the world. These chief inhabitants sat out on their verandah, to which one climbed by a knotchy pole aslant, for the house was raised on posts. I have seen such thirty feet high, but the Land Dyaks build commonly at much less elevation. The village has but one long roof; on one side is the verandah, backed by the private chambers belonging one to each family. House fathers sleep in the verandah, which is sheltered by the roof; bachelors, widowers, and men of war have their own round building at the end, where they lie beneath the smoke-dried heads of their foe-men, with arms at hand, ready for the night attack, should it occur. Thither Bate was conducted, after supping in uncomfortable state on the verandah, with 200 pairs of eyes fixed on him in silent awe, whilst 200 silent jaws ground betel-nuts with the regularity of as many mills.

Next day he started again, taking fresh coolies. Although this part is fairly peopled, and in six days of land travel they often passed a hamlet, or a "house," as we call it, without need of stopping, the Malays invariably dis-missed one set of carriers and took another. The English-man delayed their progress a good deal, and often he felt inclined to regret his enterprise, for it tries the nerves, as I can testify, to balance yourself mile after mile, day after day, on hanging logs. On the eighth evening after they left Sarawak, Bate missed his chief guide. "He's gone ahead," remarked the interpreter. "To-morrow we get home." It then occurred to my friend that he had no notion of his whereabouts, excepting only that the course had been south-west. The interpreter could not, or would not, tell him more than just the fact that they stood on Dutch territory, six days' journey from Pontianak, from

which fact Bate concluded that he must be nearly at mid-distance between sea and sea.

Next day, before the sun was hot, they reached a small clearing. A river ran down one side of it, and on the other stood an ancient house, raised on high posts, mouldy, weather-stained, and very ragged as to its thatch. The ground about it had once been tossed over in that careless fashion which Malays call gardening. All that ever comes of their industry is a score or two of sweet-smelling shrubs, which, once planted, grow in straggling luxuriance. Bate's heart failed him, looking at this scene. He had fancied all sorts of oriental magnificence environing the diamond, such as is beheld amongst the rajahs he did business with in India. But on view of that palace he exclaimed aloud, "It's a sell!"

Beneath the house stood a man so immensely fat that ropes and pulleys only, as it seemed, could take him up the ladder. Very handsomely was he dressed in silk and cloth of gold. Some fine uncut emeralds shone in the ivory hilt of his kris. The chief guide stood behind this personage. "It is the rajah!" was whispered in Bate's ear, "but call him Inchi Buyong," which means, being interpreted, Squire Bird. Bate happened to know the Malay titles, and the word Buyong he had heard fifty times on his journey when looking for game. The mystery of an incognito somewhat raised his hopes again.

Mr. Bird had a big, simple face, very yellow and very pock-marked, pendulous of cheek, small-featured, and merry-looking. He came forward and shook hands, laughing, with many compliments, which the interpreter translated. Bate was smilingly motioned to ascend the ladder. He did so in gleeful haste, to watch the "getting

upstairs" of that monstrous roll of flesh. But on reaching the top a vision appeared and struck him motionless. Bate calls it a vision—he was always susceptible. I have no doubt the girl was pretty enough—Malays of high class often are. Her skin, says Bate, was palest bronze; her eyes so large, so liquid, and so innocent, that "in looking at them a man feels all the sin he has ever done, and bitterly repents it on the spot." He proceeds to state that "he little mouth was purple as a pomegranate, and her teeth like frozen dewdrops." Clothed in robes of silk, home-spun such as our looms cannot touch for grace or softness, she leaned against the door-jamb. Her upper robe was bound above the bosom, under the arms. Bate cannot describe the costume, but there were folds of blue, and black, and red, all gleaming and shimmering with gold; and beneath the lowest edge such tiny bronze-like feet peeped out, as Europeans may imagine but never see. Sandals she wore with a little emerald knot between the great and the second toe.

Bate stood and stared till the vision, rippling into a smile, raised both hands above her head and bowed, with the little henna-stained palms turned outward; for Malays of rank, male or female, practise all the customs of their Arab teachers, saving only the veil. After her bow of welcome, the girl ran lightly past to help her large parent on his toilsome climb. More lovely still, more of a vision than before, Bate thought her, standing in the sunlight, gracefully bent over the ladder, warning and encouraging in soft Malay, and laughing gently. She had placed one little foot on the ladder; diamonds and emeralds gleamed upon each toe, but Bate thought it shameful to hide such perfection, though with jewels. The light wind stirred her

hair, which hung to the very ground, and shook perfume from the flowers with which it was bedecked.

Meanwhile, amid grunts and heavy breathing, with breathless shouts from the retainers shoving below, the rajah clambered up. Then his big head appeared, smiling anxiously at the girl, and one of her tiny hands vanished in his monstrous clutch. With teeth firmly clenched, but merry laughter in her eyes, she leaned back and dragged. Bate sprang to her assistance—they pushed vigorously below—the rajah panted and choked, though smiling still—and then the verandah shook beneath his ponderous tread. Evidently, it was no small event when this rajah descended to mother earth ; his daughter welcomed him as one who comes from a desperate enterprise. Bate, who is poetic, as I said, almost wished himself a half-ton weight, to be petted like that old gentleman. They all went together into the house, where the rajah sat beaming and catching breath, whilst his servants—he had at least a score—squatted about him, or walked stooping, as is Malay fashion for respect. The vision had disappeared, but she came back to wait upon her father at the mid-day meal, which consisted of prawn-curry, "slippery go-downs," fried fern, and boiled capsicums. Then everybody went to sleep. Towards sundown Bate strolled abroad with his gun, accompanied by the interpreter and some dozen retainers, who cut the throat of every bird he shot with religious exactitude. He came back to find the rajah smiling as placidly as before, and supper ready. Then he was conducted to a mouldy room for the night. Not a word did anybody say about the diamond, but this silence Bate understood. In fact, he had been used to practise just the same tactics when he had a "buyer" in his own tent,

And he was pleased by it also, for business would have been desecration on the day he made acquaintance with that houri.

Next day again there was no talk of the diamond. The fat rajah seemed content to sit smiling on his chair through the sultry hours, surrounded by squatting subjects, who played chess upon a board chalked out on the rotting floor. He liked to have Bate in view, feeling plainly disappointed when he left his sight. My friend was still patient, for the daughter came and went silently, quite unembarrassed, but as well aware as girl could be that she might boast an "orang putih" amongst her admirers. That sweltering day passed like the other, and a third after it. Then, in the evening, the interpreter came mysteriously, as they returned from shooting: "Inchi Buyong is satisfied," quoth he. "To-morrow, before daylight, his daughter will take you to see the diamond."

The delightful prospect of a *tête-à-tête* with a young lady who could not understand a word he said caused Bate such natural perturbation that he missed several sentences of the interpreter's broken speech. When he listened again, the Malay was saying, "The governor of Sambas or Pontianak would give 500,000 dollars in silver, at any time; but Inchi Buyong will never sell to a Dutchman. His grandfather's grandfather made a vow, and whilst they tortured him to death, he cursed the son of his who sold the diamond to a Hollander." Bate listened eagerly now, for this sounded like business indeed. The Malay went on to state that everyone of the rajah's ancestors had died a violent death, guarding the diamond. Their lands had been all taken from them and their title proscribed. Farther and farther they had moved into the woods, with a few

faithful retainers, dogged in their oriental loyalty. The rajah living had but one child—"you've seen her," said the Malay, and Bate coloured. He was anxious, therefore, to sell the heirloom, but not of course to a Dutchman, and to end his days in tranquillity. Open persecution had ceased in this last half century, but spies were always lying round. As the rajah's family had sworn not to sell, so there were great Dutch houses who had sworn to have the diamond. "Be sure they know your arrival in Sambas long before this time, and there may be trouble. But a friend of the Sarawak rajah, the 'baniak brani,' is not afraid, and our men will fight. No one knows, except the Inchi and his daughter, where the diamond lies. Before daylight you will be called."

Here was romance indeed! The tale of this poor rajah's persecution did not come fresh to Bate, for he had heard of it vaguely in Sarawak. By such means other great native houses have been forced to a "voluntary sale" of their old jewels; but this, the grandest of all, largest diamond and finest in the world, as repute affirms, has lain safe in one family for ages beyond man's reckoning. It is said to be a secret tradition of Dutch governments in Borneo to get possession of it by any means, and there are merchants' houses which have had their eyes on it from generation to generation. But Bate would of course have ridiculed the idea of any violent attempt to take it on the part of civilised and Christian gentlemen in this nineteenth century. He never thought of such a thing, not even when the rajah lost his smile, and the ragged retainers brought out each his ancient gun, and snapped it off in the verandah, and reloaded carefully.

But there were other signs of anxiety in the house that

night. Women servants whom Bate had not yet seen, save in a momentary glimpse of giggling mouth and flying petticoat, brought mats and curtains to the living room, and arranged them on the floor. The daughter, Gilumbaï, never left her father's side, and he sat with his big hand upon her neck. Hurry and bustle reigned over all the house, but those two sat quietly waiting as it seemed.

After the evening meal, which bore token of the confusion ruling—for the capsicums were not half boiled, and but one sambal was served with the curry—half the retainers went out, armed to the teeth. One by one, at intervals, they entered the dim forest. "What child's play is this?" said Bate to the interpreter.

"Wait!" he answered. "You will see! There are wild Dyaks all round us, but white men lead them on." Bate again said "Bosh!" and went to bed peevishly. He looked on this melodramatic business as foil to the diamond. Use had knocked out of him all feeling of romance upon the subject of precious stones, and manœuvres which he regarded as "sellers' tricks" caused him only irritation. "I'd seen such a lot of that sort of thing," says Bate.

But I can avouch my own experience that it startles a man to be awoke at midnight, in an unknown jungle, by the sudden, sharp roar of a matchlock. Bate sprang from his mattress, forgetting his contempt for tricks. The verandah was all astir with women hurrying to and fro with low wails and whispers. Through holes in the roof the moonlight streamed, whitening here a mosquito-net, there throwing one into pallid shade; it gleamed on bare shoulders moving rapidly, and struck into sudden, frosty sparks the brazen ornaments that tinkled as the slaves hurried across the moonbeams and the shadow. No noise

they made save that low whisper, and a rustle of their feet upon the mats. Even these sounds stilled as the rajah came out, his daughter with him, and hurriedly moved across. Bate and two or three Malays followed him to the outside verandah. They threw themselves down, and crept beneath the overhanging eave. Looking on the whole affair as melodramatic art, Bate gave it admiration unwilling but complete.

For the mounting was superb. On this side, the house looked out above the clearing towards the forest. So bright and still the air, that every petal of each flower on the shrubs was clearly outlined. Dim and misty ran the belt of trees beyond, their tops silvered by the moonlight, but their roots hid in grey fog. Half up the boles hung swathes of vapour, twined amongst the shining branches. A thousand dim, faint sounds arose, joining to make a stilly murmur; but the retainers lying in that watery shadow gave no sign of life. The rajah talked with his men in whispers, and presently they all crept back and vanished.

Bate also returned to bed, but he could not sleep. In vain he jeered at all this nonsense, and made epigrams and laughed at them. The mystery and romance of his position worked their spell. Some hours after, whilst he lay in a troubled doze, a soft voice called him. He sprang up at once. The room was pitchy dark, and no beam entered through the unglazed window overhead. "Take gun and pistol," whispered the voice in clear English; but it belonged not to the interpreter. Bate found his arms in the dark. Then a little hand seized his, and led him out. Silently they crept along a passage unknown to Bate's explorations; he supposed it to belong to the "gynaceum." Reaching the outer door, a chill wind struck him. All round and

below was blackness; the moon had set; clouds held the sky and fog the earth. Following his guide, Bate climbed down the ladder. She took his hand again, and led him across the clearing, slowly, but without a moment's hesitation. Then a gentle run of water sounded in his ears, and presently the girl whispered, "Stop! I find boat." It was found—a slender dug-out—and Bate got in at his guide's direction. She pushed off, and then a swirl of the canoe, a gentle splash and tinkling of the water, told that the girl also was embarked. They slipped into the mist that crept and slowly twined above the river. "This is a dream!" said Bate to himself.

Silently and stealthily they dropped down the mid-stream —a soft ripple only betraying their passage. Bate himself could not hear the paddle-stroke against the side of the canoe, so carefully was it muffled. He said nothing, nor did the girl. They glided down like souls afloat on Achæron —so Bate declares.

As they went on the mists grew thicker, but the girl was never at a loss. It turned bitterly cold as dawn drew near. The noises of the forest ceased, and the sudden splash of unseen beast or fish. Bate began to note dark smears of shadow in mid-air—the tops of trees whose base was lost in fog. Then the smear became continuous, and a blurred cloud showed on either hand, creeping always downward, as the wreaths of water-fog grew thinner. Suddenly, after two hours' journeying, a chill blast swept the stream, lifting the vapours, rolling them up, and scattering them. It roused Bate from a sleepy trance. All the brown river came into sight, hurrying on its track between two walls of foliage. And it showed him his guide.

Bate tells me that his feelings at this moment lie quite

beyond my description. I am inclined to think him in the right. Sufficient to say that the rajah's daughter, whom he had seen hitherto in silk and cloth of gold, now wore the simple costume of a Dyak girl—thick petticoat of woven stuff, cuirass of brazen wire, and armlets of the same from elbow to knuckle. Her shoulders and bosom were uncovered, and no gemmed sandals hid the perfect symmetry of her feet. Somewhat confused she seemed under Bate's gaze, but a visible anxiety distracted her attention. "We go too slow!" muttered the rajah's daughter; "daylight here!" and then, throwing off the mufflers from her paddle, she hurried on with greater speed.

Presently they reached an old dead tapong tree, fallen half across the stream. The floods of years had lodged against its upper side a bank of sticks, and earth, and rubbish, upon which the nipa palm sprang thickly. Cleverly the girl took her canoe round and under the tree, amongst plaited twigs and rotten branches, through which it passed with difficulty, though Bate assisted to break them down. Slowly they worked in shore, beneath the monstrous trunk. "I not been here since that high!" whispered the girl, smiling and motioning with her hand. "Let see!" She stood up, leaning on her paddle, and looked round. Beams of the rising sun flecked her round limbs and bosom as with gold.

Another foot or two they advanced; it grew dark beneath that shadowy arch.

"Now!" she said. "See that stick? Take and lift up!"

Bate saw a peg driven in the trunk above, as high as one could reach. He dutifully stretched out his hand and raised himself. The peg was slimy with dew and wet; but

it held firm. Raising himself to that level he saw another peg within reach, and another. Thus mounting, he gained a foothold on the trunk, and found himself hidden in a little grove of ferns. Simultaneously did he discover that the most enterprising and ferocious inhabitants of the country had made this one of their strongholds. Ants attacked him savagely, so that he could scarce find time to grasp his rifle, which the girl handed up ; then she herself gained a place beside him, and they walked along the tree.

Reaching firm ground they went on and on in the forest. The sun mounted higher in the sky, and grew hotter. No landmarks showed perceptible to European eyes ; but the rajah's daughter made no pause. Now and again she muttered, "These trees grow big!" but she didn't stop. After walking an hour or two straight across the forest, Bate began to get weary. So did the girl, as well she might ; but her courage did not fail, though the perspiration poured down her smooth neck and pretty shoulders. She only smiled at Bate's inquiries, and said, gently, "We soon get home—very soon!" He was lost in admiration of her courage, going thus into the bush with a stranger to show him a gem of inestimable value. A sort of patriotic thrill passed over him when, on his asking if she had no fear, the quiet answer came, "You orang Inggris! Tid' ada takut!"—I am not afraid with you! She told him how her father had sent her to learn English at Pontianak, and only laughed with glee when he reproached her for deceiving him so long about her knowledge of the language. "Iya!" she laughed. "Mana ada takut!"—about that I was shy!—I am told to mention that the rajah's daughter had one of the sweetest smiles that human lips ever framed.

They came to a lofty cliff, rising sheer above the jungle, so straight that a man might hit it with his head amongst that dense vegetation before perceiving the obstacle. She worked along it a few yards, then entered a huge cavern, such as are frequent over all Borneo. Under the low roof twilight reigned, which soon deepened into midnight blackness as they passed through a narrow opening. From the box of bamboo slung at her waist the girl produced a taper, a bit of broken crockery and a touchwood fungus. Striking the bamboo with her chip of earthenware, she soon got a light, much to the astonishment of Bate, who had not learnt the many strange tricks by which these people at one and the same time make fire for themselves and bewilderment for European *savants*.

Her taper lit, the girl went on through gallery after gallery, sometimes in twilight, sometimes in dark. Now and again she paused, and in a narrow part of the cavern stooped to arrange something under foot. After such stoppages she allowed Bate to precede her, whilst she refixed the sort of trap behind them, the feeble light just outlining her perfect figure. After half-a-dozen pauses of the sort, they reached the darkest, dampest part of the grotto. "No one been here!" she muttered, and gave him the taper. There were two or three crevices in the rock. The rajah's daughter raked them well out with her knife, "For fear of scorpions," she whispered; then began to climb like a kitten with hands and toes. Bate held the light up, but she vanished in the obscurity above. He only heard her laboured breath, and saw the slender outline of her limbs. In a few seconds something rattled down at his feet—something that gleamed and shone as never yet did diamond of the Cape. He picked it up, wildly excited,

but with no astonishment, for his doubts had vanished long ago. He knocked the earth from it, and he saw the king of all gems extant in the world.

A perfect octohedron it must have been, half as large as one's fist, and weighing probably 1,000 carats. No attempt had been made to cut it, but the angles were smoothed down and the whole surface polished. Bate estimates the stone, after this loss, at 950 carats, flawless, of the purest water, and worth, intrinsically, about £1,000,000 sterling. Whilst he gazed, in a bewilderment of professional delight, the girl slipped down from above, and put her hand upon his shoulder with exclamations of rapturous astonishment. "I never saw it before," she murmured, her eyes shining brighter than the diamond. "I only knew where it was!"

"And what is to prevent my running away with it and you?" asked Bate, hysterically.

"Oh," she laughed, "you Inggris man! And you would be struck through and through with iron spears before you reached the air. Now, what you give for it?"

The formula brought Bate to reason. He examined and weighed the stone, making even a little sketch of it, and then unwillingly gave it back. "I'll give your father all he asks, but I must have time. It is a large sum."

"Of course," she said, "we daren't take away the diamond now. Perhaps the Dyaks attack my father at this moment." Gravely she sent him a few yards off into the darkness, and climbed the rock again and disappeared with the stone. Then they threaded the cavern once more, stopping at each place as before, and resetting the arrangements with extra care. Bate asked what they were, and she answered: "Dyak deertraps. The spear strike you

through the stomach. They all of Inggris steel and never rust, you see! Inggris steel and Inggris men true and stout. Holland men false and murderers!"

On the threshold of the cave the girl stopped suddenly, raising her hand. Faint and dull through the wood came a sound of musketry. "They fight there, they kill my father!" she cried, wringing her hands. And she ran off through the sunny forest with such practised speed, that Bate had pain to follow her. A dozen times he fell headlong, but she slipped through every obstruction. Breathless, covered with ants and leeches, he reached the tapong tree in half the time it had taken them to walk the distance an hour before. At every enforced pause he heard that same dull "pound" of musketry, now slackening, now swelling to a roar. The girl had taken place in her canoe long before he even reached the tree, and she beat her paddle with impatience, calling him. Bate lumbered in, almost upsetting the tiny craft. With feverish force she paddled out and up the stream. Her wild course through the jungle had disarranged the scanty Dyak dress, but the rajah's daughter heeded not such trifles in this dreadful danger. Her loose hair fell to her very feet, twisting in the golden fringe of an under garment, hidden previously by the petticoat. She paddled with frenzy, muttering to herself a sort of chant, which Bate conceived to be the war-song of her people. Full of anger and pity for the good old rajah thus persecuted, he longed to join in his defence. But in these canoes a European is helpless. Bate could do nothing to forward their approach. And the fire grew slack, then ceased. The girl stopped the paddling a moment to listen. No sound came to them, save the murmuring of the river and the dull buzz of tree-crickets from the bank. "Malay

man all dead," she muttered. "Father taken! Look! I must swim. They not hurt Inggris man. I save myself; what can I do with you? I put you on bank at path here —walk up! Holland man take care of you, and send you to Kuching. Me they ill-use and kill perhaps. Will you go?"

"I'll go," said Bate, though the poor fellow was sure he went to certain death, "if you can save yourself. But your father?"

"He is safe. They not hurt the rajah; for he got diamond," she added, with a bitter laugh. "And he too well known in Sambas and Pontianak. Here is the path! Come back to Sarawak in twelve months, and we send the diamond to you. Good-bye, orang Inggris!"

They had come abreast of a path opening on the river. With two strokes of the paddle she pushed the canoe into shallow water, and Bate jumped over. "Good-bye!" she cried again, and swept the head of her craft round. Bate, standing to his knees in water, caught the girl as she went past and kissed her. He thought they were both doomed, and his embrace had the more sweetness and the more fury. She scarcely seemed to notice; kissing, indeed, is a practice unknown to orientals. Righting the boat again with a lithe movement of her body, she gained mid-stream and hurried down. Bate watched her out of sight, then went up the path with rifle cocked and ready, determined to have a fight at least before he died.

No one he saw, nothing heard. But, half a mile from the river, he felt there were eyes watching him. The bush moved strangely, the voices of the jungle had a peculiar significance. His flesh crept. He stood and looked, but all was still and silent. Bate longed for something to

happen. And presently, at a turn of the road, two Dyak chiefs stood before him. They had no arms, except the sheathed parang by their sides. Naked they were, but for chowats of silk and ornaments of gold innumerable. By these was Bate's suspicion roused, for he knew that Dyaks on the war-path superstitiously discard their golden trinkets. But the chiefs came forward graciously, with hands outstretched. "The English gentleman has lost his way," they said in Dutch, which Bate's Cape experience enabled him to understand. "Our young men will set him right." And, at a signal, the path was crammed with Dyaks, all armed with sumpitan and spear, who thronged round Bate with boisterous laughter. Before he could defend himself, a stalwart fellow stood within arms' length of his rifle-butt, ready to seize it on a suspicious movement. The false Dyaks, who were evidently Malays of high position, looked on smiling awhile; then said, still in Dutch, "The English gentleman wants to go home. We will show him the way!"

And so they did. At a place where the two roads met, Bate found his luggage all piled up. The Dyaks lifted it, and carried him back the way he came. Before evening he found himself at the "house" where he had slept five days before. Just as on that occasion, Dyaks of the village relieved the former bearers, and his guides prepared to depart with much gaiety. Bate tried to learn from them something of the rajah's fate, but they only laughed. That the old man's dwelling had been stormed there was visible proof in the appearance of his baggage. His Sarawak boy, however, did not turn up throughout their journey.

In due time his guides took Bate to the frontier and

passed him on. He slept at the same "houses," and found the same bearers at every stage. And so at length he reached the canoe lying *caché* on the Sarawak river, and got back to civilisation.

In Kuching the adventure made great noise, but Bate's story was so vague and so improbable that the Government could not interfere. He does not even know where it took place. After waiting at the Sarawak capital for two months without any news, he came back to England But my friend does not for an instant doubt that the rajah's daughter will keep her promise, and at the year's end he means to await her message in Kuching.

NOTE.—Sincerely do I hope that he will not be disappointed. But since he gave me this account, I have received a copy of the *Sarawak Gazette*, wherein it is told how the Governor of Pontianak, "after much persuasion, extending over many years," lately obtained leave from the Rajah of Matan to submit his "world-famous diamond" to Batavian experts. With what magnificence it travelled I have no space to tell. A man-of-war was specially detached from Java to receive it; twelve retainers, clad in yellow silk, paddled it on board; religious ceremonies were performed; half a company of marines watched it day and night. So the Matan diamond travelled to Batavia. In what manner it returned there is no record, for at a glance the lapidaries pronounced it a crystal of quartz! A correspondent adds (Feb. 1, 1875)—"The Chinese chief of Pontianak used to say that he never would have given a dollar for it. The Rajah of Matan himself told us that he, too, believed the big stone was no diamond, but added that he was not at home when his father died. He does not even know what became of the so-called 'greatest diamond in the world!'" To the Dutch official paper quoted, and to the comments of the *Sarawak Gazette*, Bate replies scornfully—1st. The stone he saw was a diamond, and he can't waste time in arguing with those who suggest that a digger of the Colesberg *kopje* could mistake. 2nd. It weighed not less than 900 carats, whilst the Matan diamond was but 360. 3rd. It seems there never existed any mystery about this stone sent to Batavia. 4th. Inchi Buyong has no son. 5th. He has a daughter!

A ROMANCE OF THE GOLD COAST.

I DO not take up my pen with the same pleasure as usual to-day. Every country I have travelled in, save one, has left me memories agreeable to recall, agreeable to set down. The Gold Coast is that exception. Writing of Borneo brings back pictures of sunny river and swift canoe, of stealthy paddling down dark reaches at daybreak, of evening walks in a still forest, whilst heaven flames like one great opal overhead. Central America, when I think of it vaguely, brings an idea of blue lakes rippling in the sunshine; of mountain cones, cloud-piercing; of savannahs, timber-belted; above all, of flowers, brilliant, varied, everywhere springing, in forest, on tree top, on Indian roof. Even the Cape has its own charm of memory—a charm of grey plains, a charm of vastness teeming with animal life, of strange shapes in nature, such as befit the eldest of the continents. Pleasant were these countries to sojourn in, pleasant to think of. One lived there, and one watched a thousand creatures living and active around. But on the Gold Coast nothing of the sort—or nothing we saw during the late expedition. It needs an effort to recall a scene or incident thereon occurring which

conveys any other impression than mere dull deadness and discomfort. We seemed all the while, as it were, to be crushed by the weight of trees, and entombed beneath a ponderous world of leaves.

I have a romance to tell with which the story of our war and the misery of life at Cape Coast Castle have little to do. But it may be allowed me to preface a few observations. As everybody knows now, the tropical coast-line of West Africa is one impenetrable forest. How broad is this wilderness of trees cannot with certainty be told. I understood M. Bonnat and his fellow-captives to put the inner verge at a distance of ten days, or 150 miles, beyond Coomassie, which itself lies 160 miles from the sea; but they were more generally understood to place it at ten *miles* only. The mistake is singular, and I regret that it was not discovered until the opportunity of re-examining M. Bonnat had passed by. But, whatever be the breadth of this jungle-belt, its thickness cannot be exaggerated. It is a peculiarity of the African bush, to me incomprehensible, that undergrowth appears to flourish there in almost equal luxuriance, whether the forest trees be old or young. In the East, under the shadow of old woods, walking is easy, but on the Gold Coast there is no ground clear of brushwood. The commonest shrub, perhaps, is wild coffee, but the natives have no use for it. In a huge thicket we made our campaign, and few officers there are who could boast of seeing one solitary beast therein, during a six months' bivouac. It is to be remembered, however, that many thousands of hungry Ashantees had occupied the country for near two years. Like the Fantees, these savages will eat anything, from a leopard to a snail. But I take it that animal life is at all times extremely rare.

The pleasures of the chase are forbidden to the resident at Cape Coast Castle.

In every country under the tropics a traveller curious in zoology must be greatly dependent on native shikaris—men who make hunting a serious part of life, and who inherit traditions of venerie from their forefathers. It is my experience of Africa that such trained hunters are almost unobtainable. Sir Samuel Baker's evidence forbids us to believe that no shikaris can be found throughout the continent, and indeed I have myself used the services of a Congo slave with infinite pleasure and success. This was on the Mosquito Coast, whither he had wandered from Jamaica. But those parts of Africa in which I have travelled—Nubia, Griqualand, and the Gold Coast, districts north, south, and west—appear to be destitute of such a class. I found the tradition of a hunter still lingering at Cape Coast Castle, but not one to be discovered in bodily presence. More than that, I could scarcely hear of a negro who might be classed amongst woodsmen. Your Fantee turns all his attention towards "trade," beyond which he has no ideas at all—trade, which mainly consists in getting credit, and then "taking advantage of the Act." You may doubt, but it will remain most marvellously true, that our bankruptcy law is in force amongst these naked savages. Not the townsmen only, but the "bush people," have the same ambition for trade, with this difference alone, that the latter possess such capital as their clearings are worth, in maize, cassava, and ground nuts: the former have only impudence, but in a stock that suffices.

No experts of any branch of science followed our expedition, and the absence of them attracted much comment. One cannot believe that volunteers would have

failed had they been called for. I do not know who is to blame for this luckless omission, but I would willingly lay the offence on that enduring and irresponsible scapegoat, Government. It is not surprising, on reflection, that the *rôle* of scientific observers should remain unfilled by amateurs. In the first place, our volunteer or special service officers were mostly young men, impelled by an earnest desire to "get on" in their profession; not the class which generally devotes itself to abstract and unremunerative study. Again, they were very, very hard worked, having to drill a stupid and unwarlike race of savages in the face of an enemy. Poor Capt. Nicol, killed at Borboriassi, made some collections of lepidoptera; but I did not understand from him that he laid any claim to knowledge of the subject, and of his collections I never heard the fate. The regimental officers who came out had absolutely no time for such pursuits. For my own part, I made every effort to establish such a system of trapping, &c., as I had carried on with success elsewhere; but quite in vain. A man was reported to have once upon a time caught birds for a governor round Cape Coast Castle; but he had long been dead, and nobody wished to fill his place.

An unscientific but decided opinion of mine was confirmed by observations during this war. Vultures, I am satisfied, hunt by sight. Not a corpse did we find on the return march showing traces of their attack. As we left so we found them, untouched by bird or beast in the five or six days of our absence. What I have said on this subject in my book "Through Fantee-land to Coomassie" has been somewhat misunderstood. It is not meant that hyænas hunt by sight in West Africa, but that they do not exist in the country traversed. I think the evidence afforded by

the Ashantee expedition is almost conclusive as to the vulture's nose. He abounds at clearings or villages—that is, in every situation where he can use his sight; but in the bush, where smell only would serve him, he abides not. The reek of putrefaction between Adahsu and Amoaful was strong enough in some places to summon every vulture from fifty miles to leeward, had they the keen scent vouched by Mr. Waterton. But it doesn't follow, I think, that the bird has no scent at all. In Coomassie, that metropolis of murder, the number of turkey-buzzards surprised even those of us who had visited the Spanish Main. They hung upon every tree in scores, impatient, no doubt, for the horrid meal to which they were daily used; but none perceived the banquet spread for them *in the bush*, only six miles away, at the Dah river.

Kites also dwell in great numbers at Coomassie, where they have a tameness shocking to observe. Our strange presence alarmed them not at all. The whole day through they skimmed amongst us, now stirring one's very hair, now snatching a morsel from the ground. Whether sailing high or low, they twittered, a plaintive, melancholy note, well befitting that dismal place. If murdered negroes turn to kites, in such tones they might plead for pity, in such express their shuddering horror of the spot.

At the palace we found a "May-hen," as the bird is called in Cape Colony (*Balearica regulorum*). It ran up to me when I entered, seeking a caress. The court was full of sullen slaves, to whom it gave no heed. The last may-hen I had seen was at Hopetown, on the Orange River, where it dwelt in friendship with a Kaffir crane. The two belonged to owners living at opposite ends of the settlement; but whilst daylight lasted they were inseparable. At bed-

time the may-hen gravely escorted his mate home, saw her comfortable for the night, then marched up the street to his own roost in a dog-kennel. I have watched this droll performance a score of times, and it was the sight of Hopetown in my day. The private courts of the Ashantee palace were peopled with tortoises, and I saw a great number of cats about.

From noxious insects the Gold Coast is strangely free. Neither fleas, bugs, mosquitoes, jiggers, nor ticks are found in numbers to annoy. Why mosquitoes should be so few puzzled my science. Were they absent altogether, one would understand the case; but that they should be scarce in a climate so thoroughly suiting them embarrasses the theorist. At Coomassie, however, both mosquitoes and bugs abounded, especially in the palace.

The climate of this table-land wholly differs from that we found on the seaward side of Adansi. Both horses and oxen will live at the Ashantee capital. Several sheds we discovered, near to the palace of a great chief, full of dry fern and grass—evidently stables. The horses, I understood, were small, and of Arab or Barb breed. All the world knows that neither horse nor ox, nor even donkey, will live on the south bank of the Prah. Nature has spoken loudly enough, warning us that the Gold Coast is not fit for human habitation. Folly they talk, and worse than folly, who propose to purify that poisonous shore by means of drainage and nostrums of the sanitary board. As easy blow off the cholera steam with a patent *aspersoir*. Is it want of drainage which forbids cattle to breathe the forest air and live? Neither drains nor the need of them are found in the bush; but if there be on earth a race more unhealthy than the Fantee of Cape Coast it is the Fantee

forest-born. This country is not adapted for humanity. To that text I cling, in spite of prejudice, in spite of policy alleged. It is not memory of suffering which urges me to the combat. The Ashantees dread an expedition seawards, for their black skin protects them not a whit; it protects not even the Fantees, the natives of the country. In a campaign of eighteen months Amanquattiah's army dwindled to one half of its former strength under the attacks of fever and dysentery; such, at least, was the common report in Coomassie, brought down to us by the missionaries released. As a question of mere policy, I hold that the retention of the Fantee Protectorate is unjustifiable, but the arguments on that point would be quite out of place here. The unhealthiness of human beings, the rapid extinction of our domestic animals, and the rarity of living things in general, on the Gold Coast, are Nature's warning against our vain attempt to establish an empire thereon. But I am wandering very wide.

Everyone knows how the laziness and cowardice of the men of Cape Coast Castle compelled us to employ female labour to the greatest possible extent. I landed on the Gold Coast just at the time that this necessity became apparent. The first appeal of Mrs. Barnes, Mrs. Swanzy, and Mrs. Hutchinson to their country-women, exhorting them to make up the shortcoming of their male relatives, had been publicly cried about the streets only a day before. Handsomely the Fantee women responded. Next morning the Castle yard was crammed with them—if stuffed be a stronger word, read it for "crammed." Of every age they were, and every rank, we heard, had its representatives. There is no pride about the Fantee nobility. In lands where the plantain flourishes, where soil goes begging, and

clothes are a mere luxury, the necessaries of life hang at each man's door. It follows that a sixpence has almost as much value to the daughter of a chief or a jungle king, as to the poorest subject. It is scarcely more useful to one than to the other, and both will spend it alike in luxury.

All classes, therefore, had turned out on invitation, urged, perhaps, in some small measure, by good-will towards us, but much more by the promise of a shilling a day and food. The transport officers, who had been wearing out body and soul and whipcord in the effort to squeeze work from the male population, were not a little perplexed when their picturesque court-yard was invaded by a thousand women. Very speedily they found that the newcomers meant work, but they found also that tricks and fun and coquetry are not confined to the women of one colour. There was as yet no system of gangs or tickets. Often the new duties proved to be puzzling, and the labourers would do naught but giggle. It seemed to give them endless amusement to tease their officers, mostly very young, and these, half laughing, half angry, could devise no means of enforcing discipline. The Fantee drivers, however, felt no scruple, and many a sharp blow fell amongst the crush of naked shoulders when the white man's back was turned, and the only complaint he could receive was an unintelligible wail.

In the thickest of this confusion I passed beneath the shady arch looking seawards. Two hundred women had been told off to carry in rice-bags from the beach. Groaning, and with heavy toil, clustered like bees around the bags, they dragged them in, deposited, and then ran out, singing and dancing on the sun-bright sand. Hoary

beldames worked side by side with their grandchildren—the merest slips of girlhood. Uglier than words can tell were the elders, though they toiled in a prismatic mist of spray, with arching rainbows overhead. The younger women possessed more than could be expected of the *beauté du diable*, and their figures had points of great symmetry. The shadows of the lofty buildings round the court-yard fell upon a seething shoal of black womanhood, laughing, crying, pushing this way and that. Some piled boxes, some hauled bags, some ranged rifles on the ground. Transport officers, red and perspiring under their umbrellas, scolded and laughed in a breath. Helmeted on-lookers surveyed the scene from lofty balconies, with wonder and amusement. The sunny side of the yard was almost equally full. Hither girls retired to arrange a disordered *coiffure*, no light business with a Fantee belle, or to adjust their scanty dress. The sunshine glistened on rows of shoulders, teeth of ivory all displayed, and eyes as bright as our brightest. Amongst them, every moment, the drivers rushed, pulling defaulters back to their gang, and savagely returning the chaff that greeted them. From the arch at the end of the court, female recruits still poured in, to be numbered for employment. I had scarcely introduced myself, with the utmost brevity, to a badgered and perspiring officer of control, when I heard a sergeant say, "Begum, she's the prettiest lass I ever seed, for a black 'un!"

There could be no doubt at all of the sergeant's judgment. The girl standing before him was really pretty. From what race of the far interior she inherited those delicate and well-cut features I do not know. Her hair was woolly, of course, but close-growing, and of no incon-

siderable length. It was gathered up all round, forming a cushion on the head, in which, with the happiest effect, a butterfly of gold was pinned. Of lithe and graceful figures abundance could be seen all round, but none so lissome ; we all looked at her with surprise as she stood modestly before us. But that was no time for curiosity. In another moment the girl had been dismissed to join a gang of her countrywomen, and was laughing and hauling with the rest.

Half an hour afterwards a sudden uproar in the court, dominating the usual hubbub, called me to a balcony. Several drivers surrounded a tall young negro, whom they lashed furiously with their twisted rattans. He, however, without attention to them, stamped and trod upon a hallooing wretch beneath. Screaming women formed a circle round, through whose excited ranks the white men present could scarcely force a way. But one blow from the stalwart sergeant in great part restored order, and then the rioter was held down amongst the rice-boxes in a most uncomfortable attitude. Then, above the uproar of the surf, which booms for ever on that tortured coast, arose such a war of women's tongues as made a treble fitting that thunderous bass. Into the midst of it I hurried down, whilst the offender was dragged into the cool, dark magazine. There, seated on cartridge-boxes, two officers tried his case. The negro awaited judgment with no little dignity, standing erect and bold. An interpreter gave in his defence ; the beaten driver found little to urge, though he pleaded with astonishing volubility, and in five minutes the prisoner was set free. The beauty I have mentioned caused all the mischief. With the rest of her gang she had been teasing the driver, who lost patience at length and struck the girl

a stinging blow with his rattan. The prisoner, who was ranging rifles close by, instantly knocked him down, and so the row began. The driver got a reprimand, and the girl was laughingly dismissed as an article dangerous among so much combustible matter. She left the yard half laughing, half crying, and I saw no more of her.

My quarters at Cape Coast Castle were in the house of a merchant, who made that dreariest of all stations a pleasant place. Returning from this foray or that against the wild Ashantee, I found a home awaiting me such as few enjoyed. To this comfort I gratefully attribute my immunity from any sickness of a kind unknown in England —an immunity shared by Lord Gifford alone, I believe, amongst all who served an equal time with me. From my friend I received some explanation of the disturbance in the castle. The girl, Ashan, was a notable person, ranking as the belle of Cape Coast, beyond all contradiction or rivalry. She was also numbered among its greatest catches, standing in the position of heiress-apparent to the honours and wealth of an uncle. He indeed had several children, but by the law of succession universal on the Gold Coast, property and rank descend in the female line alone. The eldest nephew on that side inherits; failing nephews, the eldest niece. Even household slaves have a claim before legitimate children. It is usual, but not compulsory, for a woman to assign the honours so inherited to her husband or son. Thus the King of Ashantee now reigning was chosen from all her children by his mother, to whom the throne had descended. Ashan, therefore, was a person important in all ways. The negro who defended her was a slave. He had been enrolled for years amongst the numerous train of Ashan's admirers; but devotion is a

claim little esteemed. On the coast of Africa, indeed, as in Malay countries, servitude is not necessarily a bar to a man's advancement. He may acquire great influence, and even wealth, whilst still a slave. Asa, however, had not yet found the opportunity to distinguish himself, nor did he possess the means of purchasing his own freedom ; much more of paying the handsome dowry demanded for a girl of such lofty expectations. The girl's friends naturally wished to keep her in the family if possible ; if not, to find her a husband whose influence might be useful. They laughed the slave to scorn. But his manliness and his devoted love —so rare in that country—had won him the sympathy and interest of all the Europeans resident. He had worked in the service of my friend for some years, until the outbreak of the war caused a general impressment.

Some weeks passed, bringing several engagements with the enemy, in which we were victorious, though they fought well. At length the Ashantees gathered from all points to assault Abrakrampa, with disastrous results. Amongst the hundreds of carriers who followed Sir Garnet Wolseley, when he arrived in the gloaming to relieve that village,—what time the jungle all round it smoked with musketry as though a-fire, and the din was so great one could scarcely hear one's voice—I recognised Asa. I saw him again in the forest at dawn, as I returned from examining the abandoned camp of the foe at Addismadi. I suppose it was in that morning's excursion he looted the means to buy his freedom, which was duly secured, as —— told me, within a week afterwards. He came to our house to inform his late master of this advancement, and of his intention to enlist in the police, then reforming under our poor friend, Captain Thompson, of the Queen's Bays. Shortly after I met him ;

very stalwart and ready he looked, in uniform of blue serge and forage cap scarlet bound.

As a free man and a constable—no small position out yonder—Asa lost no time in renewing his addresses. But Ashan still laughed, and her family still scouted. Considering the insecurity of a policeman's life in that war time, it was a very handsome offer of ——'s to go security for his former servant to the amount of a £20 dowry, but the girl's relations would not accept it. Asa began to grow savage. He had always been distinguished by a quality of firmness, and of grim hatred for those who injured him, very unusual amongst the light-hearted Fantees; it probably came of his slave blood, from a tribe of the far interior, beyond Coomassie. We heard of his indulging wild threats against those who stood between him and happiness, even against Ashan. These threats grew louder and more bitter after his return from Wassaw, whither he accompanied Captain Thompson on his mission to make peace between the kings of that country;—a mission of which that lamented officer sent an admirable account to one of the daily papers. By some means, digging perhaps, Asa contrived to bring back four ounces of gold from that rich country, which sum, with the £20 promised, he instantly offered for the girl of his choice. Such a large price would once have bought the fairest daughter of the richest king on the Gold Coast, but the flood of wealth we have suddenly turned into the country has produced the result that a shilling goes scarcely further than did sixpence before the war. I take it that £200,000 in silver was paid to the Fantee population before Coomassie fell, and the price of wives has risen with that of other commodities. Asa seemed to be no nearer than before to the object of his wishes. His passion grew more fierce.

He did not go with us to Coomassie; unluckily, I think, for daily danger purifies the heart of passion. Men do not revolve actions of the cruellest selfishness during such a time. Asa, I doubt not, would have done his duty with as much quiet courage as did his fellows in blue and scarlet, but he had not the opportunity. Promoted to the rank of corporal, he remained upon the coast, where his mind, already distorted, was subject to the exciting influence of suspense. To the exaltation of all people's spirits there, during the time of our hazardous expedition, I attribute, in great measure, the tragedy that occurred. It was indeed an hysterical season at Cape Coast Castle, where the peaceful professions of the king deceived but few. Ashantee land had always been a name of mystery and dread to the Fantees. They knew it as a gloomy forest, whence issued, from time to time, a swarm of savage foes, irresistible, destructive as locusts, senselessly bloodthirsty as evil spirits. To few Fantees is given that enterprise which sends Ashantee traders into every land around, braving hostility and the perils of the wilderness. By means of his merchants, intrepid as soldiers, the king has an army of spies, self-paid, ever-moving, ever-observant. It is not borne so constantly in mind as one could wish, that the Ashantees are not fighters only beyond comparison with any other nation in that part—Houssas, Mandingos, and Kossus are not united—but they are also craftsmen and traders of greater skill than all their rivals, except, perhaps, the mysterious folks of Selaga. But if these stand highest, Fantees certainly rank last in all respects, saving that foul crew of Sierra Leone, who lighted bonfires to celebrate the rumour of Sir Garnet's defeat and death. The inhabitants of Cape Coast Castle did

not know enough of Ashantee even to make up credible "flams." Terrible was the still suspense that followed the disappearance of our last soldiers along the burning road that leads to Coomassie. At last news came that Lord Gifford had seized the Adansi Hill without opposition. Another pause; then the battle of Amoaful. And then, post by post from the Prah bank, came tidings of attack upon every station in our rear. The population nearly lost its senses with anxiety and excitement. The most thought us overwhelmed, and daily looked for horrid news.

The night after Amoaful was reported, a gathering took place at the house of the old chief, Ashan's uncle. I know the dwelling; it is a tumble-down old barrack of two stories, with a high, ragged roof of thatch. Its walls of mud are guttered with rain-sloots; its rough window-frames all awry; its shutters—there is, of course, no glass—hang by one hook each. A flight of wooden steps on the outside leads to the first floor. Before it stands a ragged palm-tree. No furniture is there within, except such bottles and boxes, and odds and ends, as members of the family have found means to steal from their white masters. The chief, however, has his chair, studded with brass nails, and one or two stools of cotton-wood lie about. Very much inferior are these to the handsome and tasteful articles of the sort we found in Ashantee. The life of the people is led outside, in the blazing sunshine; but there are always half-a-dozen youths, unkempt and frowsy, lolling out of the frowsy air-holes. Beneath, women and slaves pound corn all day, or ceaselessly comb and dress their wool. Before them are more mud houses, more filthy ruins. Beside them the street, sloping down to an avenue that fronts the market-place. Far behind, a colourless sea

glittering in heat; nearer, a mist of flying foam, ever renewed as surf falls thudding upon sand, like strokes of the Creator's hammer. The very ocean's self appears to hurl upon that shore. Far out in the sweltering haze, mark you a sigh, a heave—a long, low shudder of the sea—a creeping muster of dim forces. A sunlit ridge appears; swiftly it sweeps and swells. The deeps are drained as it passes by. A dank wind flies along its crest, screams of the tortured water issue from it. The hurrying mountain shuts out sea and sky. The wet sand drains to meet it. Above the shore, for a thought-space it towers, a wall of dark green crystal, fluted with hurrying foam;—then down and down, an avalanche of water, it pounds down, shaking the solid earth, thundering out all other noise—and drags back, screaming, seaward.

Ashan's home was in the house I have described. The evening proved chilly, and the household withdrew within to comfort itself over the fire of trade rum. Asa silently brooded, discussing his share of the poison. Suddenly he broke into the story of his love and wrongs, finishing with a passionate appeal to Ashan. He produced his four ounces of gold, and repeated ——'s promise to lend him six ounces more. The girl angrily refused his suit, and her relations added jeering words. Asa went out and wandered on the beach an hour; then came back and renewed his prayer. Someone threw an empty bottle, which struck him on the ear. Standing then in the doorway, whilst the blood trickled down his neck, he uttered the irrevocable words, which to hear is horror: "By the death of Sir Charles Macarthy, and by my head, I devote your life to the fetish, Ashan!" And he turned and went away. Next morning his corpse was found in the bush.

A terrible vengeance! The people of the house wailed all through the night, and within an hour all Cape Coast Castle knew that their beauty's life was sworn away. Such an event had not occurred for years, and indescribable was the excitement. But not even then might the secrets of the fetish be disclosed to white unbelievers. The terror of that dread superstition is that it lies beyond the jurisdiction, because beyond the knowledge, of Christian authority. Not a whisper reached the magistrates. If the victim thought of escape by their means, she was prevented from communicating. Perhaps, in a time of less excitement, Ashan might have found means to bribe the fetishmen, but how dared they juggle with the evil power when the country stood in such deadly peril? It could not be. Twenty-four hours they gave the poor girl to bewail her fate. Then, escorted by the old chief and her nearest relations, she was taken to that gloomy gorge where are practised the awful mysteries of the fetish; and was seen no more of men.

I shall be perfectly frank. This tragedy I have told you did not really take place under my own observation, nor during the course of the late war. I have post-dated it, and given it somewhat of a personal "colour," in order to make interesting events which came before me in the bald outline of a police report. I hope I have succeeded. The substantial truth of the story has been impaired in no way.

THE CHASE OF THE MAJOR.

AT the Café Riche the other night a man leant towards me from the next table, and said: "I think you're the gentleman who put me in a book awhile ago?"

An uncomfortable address this from a stalwart young American, bronzed, bearded, large of hand, and bold of eye.

"Not to my recollection!" I replied.

"Oh, never mind!" he said laughing. "There's no harm done. But as you've printed the beginning, wouldn't you like to hear the end of that adventure in Jacobsdaal three or four years ago?"

"I see you mind me now," he continued, drawing nearer on the divan. "Lord! wasn't that a happy family we dined with at Widow Hutton's accommodation-house in Jacobsdaal? No man will see such times again over yonder. They tell me there's an extradition treaty, or some such foolishness, betwixt the Cape Colony and the Republics. At the top of the table sat A., whose tent we'd burnt down three weeks before for receiving stolen diamonds. With his old smoking-cap cocked over one eye, he looked like a mouldy hawk afflicted with a rictus. I saw your face when he affably asked you to mutton, and I saw his too when

you paid no attention. I'd not walk in front of A. on a lonely road by night if I was you. Then half-way down the table sat H., poor fellow, and the kindest word to plead for him would be lunacy. Opposite was my own friend the Major, a sample for rogues ; another man-slaughterer farther down, and another thief at the bottom. Jehoram ! What fun that was ! "

Well, I remembered it all whilst he spoke, the quaint little hostelry at Jacobsdaal and the strange companions of our table d'hôte. Lying, as does this South African village, just within the border of the Free State, it of course became the refuge of all those for whom our diamond-fields had become too hot. In many odd societies of many lands I have mixed, but never before or since did I sit at meat with men accused and self-convicted of petty larceny. Very well also I recollected the grave and morose Yankee, Major B. At the same level, on my side, sat the gentleman now finishing his tale, a brisk young fellow, clad in cords and spurred knee-boots, looking ready and eager to take the veldt at a minute's notice. He watched every movement of the major like a cat at a mouse-hole. But the major never once glanced across, keeping his eyes upon his plate. They rose together, and young top-boots followed his prey at six inches' distance. Having watched him settle to a game of écarté with a friendly man slaughterer, in the canvas annex of the hotel, he sat down with Jacklin and me close by, and told us the secret of his vigilance. Major B., this gentleman, and two partners owned a claim at New Rush, which had proved fortunate. The grave and respectable American appointed himself receiver of the "finds." Something agitated his confiding partners with suspicion, and they summoned him to yield

the joint possessions. This he gravely and respectably declined to do. Appeal being made to Judge Giddy, the treasurer vanished. The most active of the partners was hastily furnished with a warrant, but he could not overtake his man on the right side of Jacobsdaal. Not the least idea had he of giving up the hard-earned diamonds for all that, and he declared himself ready to pursue even to Delagoa Bay, 1,500 miles as the crow flies.

"Major B. gave you the slip next morning," I said, laughingly.

"That's as far as you got with the tale," he replied. "I don't mind if I tell you the rest. Here, boy! garçon!" cried he to the stately maître d'hôtel, whom I always address as Monsieur Louis. That refined and courteous gentleman came up affably. "Cigars!" ordered the irreverent youth. "*Los mejores*, you know." I translated, and the cigars came.

"Yes," he went on, after lighting up, and stretching himself. "B. gave me the slip. He'd got a bed in the old stable, and I slept in the canvas shed that stood crosswise to it. Half-a-dozen times I got up in the night and looked through the open door. There lay my man, fast asleep in the white bar of moonshine streaming in, his black portmanteau at his feet. It made me mad, I tell you, to see him snoring there, when I'd a warrant for felony in my pocket against him. At last I fell sleepy, and seeing the end of that portmanteau through the doors each time I opened an eye, I thought all was right."

"And so he slipped off before daylight," I said. "You had just time to tell us before galloping away."

"I remember that. I galloped something that day. B. was no traveller, and I knew he wouldn't dare leave the

track on such a lonely veldt. But he was no horseman neither; and when evening came on, and all the boers I asked said the same thing—how some such a man had passed two or three hours before—a sort of voice in me began to talk loud. I'd heard him within an hour of the start, but towards sundown he set to shouting. At last the thing put itself into words, and 'Think of Seth Peagrim's nugget,' it said.

"You've never heard of Seth Peagrim's nugget, likely? It's a story of some years ago; but it runs for a proverb in Nevada, where I come from. Seth came from the mountain one day, and it was soon told about that he'd found a nugget so big he couldn't carry it. Thereon, three loafers of Polt's-dam took up his trail and lifted it back. Seth saw 'em go, and he laughed. 'You'll find my shanty up yonder,' shouts he. 'Make yerselves at home, but don't spile my furniture!' Three weeks they hung around the clearing, half-starved, prying into every hole on the mountain side, while Seth, he drunk here and there, troubling himself nary mite about 'em. When they came back, you never heard a man make better laughing than did Seth Peagrim out of them loafers. He fell rough on them, I tell you. A month after—not more hurried than that—he went up the mountain with his brother-in-law and another honest man, and they brought down the nugget in three lumps. Where d'you think it had lain? Why, in the shanty, covered with baked clay; and those three fools had used it as a fire-stone! D'you see how the tale works in?"

"Can't say I do, off-hand," I answered.

"Ah! you didn't cut your teeth on the mountains! I began to think our diamonds might, as like as not, be

hidden as was Seth Peagrim's nugget. Once that idea in my skull, I began to consider. If the man ahead was not B., the sooner I got back the brighter I should look. Spying about, I saw a farmhouse, some mile off the track, and I said, 'If the *compadre* is not there, it's there he's changed horses.' So it was: he'd swopped B.'s nag against a pard, and set off again. I did ditto, and set back, for the decoy was just one of our Jacobsdaal man-slaughterers. I cursed him pretty long and various on the back track, but perhaps he hadn't the best of the joke, for, at the pace that *hombre* went, he seemed set on reaching Bloemfontein without cooling saddle. There was a splendid moon, as you remember; and, vexed as I was, I laughed to think of him titupping over the veldt in front of me, who had my back to him. Towards dawn I reached Jacobsdaal again, got into the canvas shed, and took two hours' snooze.

"It was when I woke that the puzzle began."

"So I should think," said I.

"Yes! It's one thing to chase your fox over the level, and another to sort him out amongst a flock of sheep. But Jacobsdaal is only a little camp, if one don't heed its chatter. I'd soon discovered where my man took his cart and whither he was bound. There was a good Samaritan in the place; I'd like to name him, for such aren't number-some. He took my word for £50, and if I'd had time and a looking-glass I'd have shown myself round awhile in town, so spry that circumstance did make me feel. He arranged too about the horses, found me a cart, and the best pards in Jacobsdaal. By noon I was off again, bound for the colony. But B. had a mortal long start.

"I went right through to Hopetown before night; lord!

how the springbok scurried from our track. At Belmont there was bad news. The passenger waggon had left Hopetown that same morning, and it travels night and day, as you know. My only chance was to take the post-cart, which should leave at midnight. Soon as I got to Hopetown I drove to the office, and found all the three seats engaged. I guessed I should have a fit."

"You must have been very tired," I said.

"One would have thought I was, but it's only the doctor can say what a healthy man will go through if he's put to it. You must have found that out, I should guess."

"Yes," I said, remembering. "I've marched nine miles through West African jungle, fought half the day, and marched back, upon a cup of coffee and six captain biscuits. Twenty hours, eighteen jungle miles, and a running fight on that provender!"

"Well," resumed the American, "I'd food in plenty. For £5 down one of the passengers gave me his seat. I slept till midnight at the inn, and it was Heaven's mercy I woke then, for the post-cart was starting as I ran up. You know what sort of trap it is? Just an open body, piled with mail-bags, a mad black biped to drive, and four mad quadrupeds in front of him. One of the passengers didn't turn out, and, 'Sold for £5!' cried I. He tore up shouting as we plunged off, but the Hottentot only grinned and never minded. For the matter of that, six of him couldn't have pulled up them four-legged devils. With nose and heels in the air by turn, plunge, buck, snort, and jib, they raced away—now in a heap, now over the road, biting, whinnying, kicking. The driver, bent like a bow, was all agrin. Lord! but that was windy travelling. We two tossed up and down and against each other on the mail-

bags, holding to the sides, or we'd have been pitched out like peas. I thought such a pace couldn't last, for it was my first journey in a mail-cart. But it did! Lasted a day and a half. When his over-fed horses began to tire of their pranks, the driver screamed at them, and when he got hoarse he cracked his long whip like a pistol. Every three hours we picked up a relay of fresh devils, two-legged and four-legged. Morning came and then evening came, always heaving and pitching, always choked with dust and the fiery wind. I'm tough, but when I tell you I didn't know my fellow-passenger from Adam after travelling thirty hours with him, you'll judge the case was bad. Reaching Victoria, I guess we were as near dead as might be. But the first thing which caught my eye, as we galloped up the street, horses stretched out and foaming, Hottentot a-tivy-ing on his horn, and all the village dogs about our heels, was that transport waggon at the inn-door, harnessed up, and the passengers clambering to their seats. I just got out on the step and jumped. 'Hebben niet langer dan een kivartier!' screamed the Totty. Much I cared how long he had to wait. I'd hurt myself a bit in falling, but I limped down to the inn, as cheerful as a boy to his bird-trap.

"The guard was just crying, 'All aboard' as well as he could speak with his mouth full of fricadel. Those who waren't mounted came running out. I stood aside, mighty polite, to let them pass. First came a fat man, all whiskers and paunch, rigged like a Dutch Falstaff, in straw hat and veldt schoen. 'Goede morgen, baas,' I said, and 'Goede morgen,' he muttered. Another and another followed. 'All aboard?' cried the conductor. 'All aboard, and be d—— to you,' grumbled the passengers.

"'Stop!' I cried; 'there's another! Don't be in such a darned hurry.'

"'Another?' shouted the guard, and 'Another!' screamed passengers.

"'Yes,' says I. 'Where's your Major B.?'

"'None of them digger larks with me,' howls the guard. 'We know you chaps, and some of you gets your blessed heads punched in the colony. All right there? Off you go, leader!'

"And off the waggon went, full swing, guard with his finger to his nose, and all the passengers across the taff-rail, chaffing at me. In a minute they was hidden in a whirl of dust, and I just sot down on the stoop, feeling mighty perplexed and fit to cry.

"The landlord comes up to me: 'Seem kinder dull, you do!' says he. 'Have a pickaxe, and tell a friend about it!' I didn't seem to mind, and I followed him. 'What's the rumpus?' says he. And I told him.

"A man who wasn't born far from the grind-wheel is that landlord of Victoria. I'd as soon hear him talk as any man I know. He listened to me, sucking his pipe, and says he: 'Did you ever come across a man as kept the fat of his cheeks in his waistcoat pocket at meal times?'

"'What d'ye mean?' I asked skeery.

"Or did ye ever see a fine complexion stain a table napkin? Because there's the napkin on that chair, and what's left of the complexion is travelling over the veldt at this moment as fast as eight horses can gallop. That's all.'

"'I ran out bareheaded, just in time to see the post-cart vanish in a whirlwind, like a machine bewitched. Too late I was! The landlord had followed me. It's a sweet place, Victoria, and I've none but good words to say of it,

but it's bound on me to state that that Samaritan had probably naught else to do. What with fatigue, and disappointment, and fury, I was like to go mad. The landlord took me by the arm—he was a big man—and dragged me into a bedroom. 'Go to sleep!' says he, and after a spell I went to sleep for twenty-four hours.

"He woke me then. 'The next post-cart will be by shortly,' he says. 'Come and have dinner.'

"Dinner I had, and in due time I was sitting on a heap of mail-bags, with a fresh assortment of devils in the front of me. The last words that good fellow spoke was: 'Don't be took in again by a fat man like Johnny at the fair!' I laughed, thinking there was no fear of that.

"Across the everlasting veldt we galloped and galloped till I thought the end of all things was at hand for this digger. According to time, we were bound to pass the waggon on Great Karroo desert, and I held on. But leaving Beaufort, after ninety hours' race and scrimmage, the horses upset us against an ant-hill. It was night, but we weren't hurt, only we had to cut the brutes loose. Mounted on one of them, the driver raced back to Beaufort, leaving me in mid track with all her blessed Majesty's mail-bags, under guard of the stars of Heaven. Without a word he vanished in the darkness, like a black ghost, if ever there was one. I thought of friends at Old de Beer's, whose plunder of diamonds lay unprotected in the veldt at midnight, and I kept guard faithfully, rubbing my bruises. Maybe I sat on one hundred thousand pounds' worth of stones, as you know, if not double of that. And B. all the while was rolling farther and farther away with our share. Madness kept me awake a time, and when I slept, I dreamt I was choking that wretch.

"It was morning when the Hottentot came back with a new cart and four fresh prancers. We loaded up the bags anyhow!—it made me shudder to see how they pitched our diamonds about, but no one is responsible for mails out yonder. Lord, how we did swim along to pick up lost time! Another day and another night through the desert, through the two kloofs, brought me to Wellington, as much as was left of me. I wanted a coffin or a bed, and I didn't greatly care which. But the sight of that village, and the transport horses coming back all asteam from the railway, brightened me up. I was to time; the train didn't start for ten minutes! Telling the station-master my business, we stood at the wicket and waited. Passengers came running in, but my man not amongst them. We waited, waited till the whistle blew—No fat man, nothing like him!

"'Seems Major B. has given you the slip,' said the station-master. What with the worry of it, and the fever, I was half mad. 'He must be here! Stop the train!' I shouted. The station-master looked at me, and lifted his hand. I'd but just time to clamber into a carriage, and off we were. Like a heap I fell on the seat! There wasn't a soul to talk to, and I dropped off to sleep in five minutes. There was no helping it! And I slept till the guard lifted me out and stood me against a post in Capetown station, five minutes after every passenger had left. And there I was——"

"Sold!" said I, for the American stopped, looking hard at me.

"Sold! If there wasn't a Providence for honest diggers, I wouldn't be here now taking my ease in Babylon. All I could do, and all the police could do, didn't fetch the major. They found me six suspicious individuals a day; but he was

no suspicious character, bless you! An archbishop would have asked him to dinner at first sight. For my own part, I searched the clubs and the best hotels, but nowhere was the major to be found, fat or thin. And the steamer was due!

"Well! I take no credit for it. The thing had gone beyond me. It was a woman spotted him at a glance. The major had carried on pretty far with a half-caste girl in times back. She met him on the beach one day, where he used to walk under our very noses, and asked him for a trifle of money. B. refused; they got to words; police came up. In his passion that lunatic gave the girl in charge. She called him by his name, and he found himself in the tronk before he could "explain," as the beggar said. Then they came and told me. Just as I passed the lock-up door the English steamer hove in sight. Well, and—that's all!"

"You got back your diamonds?"

"The most of them, or money equivalent."

"Major B. was the fat man, I suppose?"

"Fat man at Victoria, and black fellow sitting on a truck at Wellington. D'you know—he was an awful scoundrel, but—p'r'aps I'm only half ashamed, after all, to remember he was a fellow-countryman. It was a fine burst, wasn't it?"

THE "SARAWAK GAZETTE."

CHARLES LAMB could find three volumes of romance, and a didactic poem, in the manifest of an East Indiaman's cargo. Not to anyone is given the ingenious diligence of Charles Lamb, and for every merchant's clerk in London, pepper, and cotton, and jute, and indigo are the very most prosaic articles encountered on the day's round. But a complete collection of some documents, almost as dry as a bill of lading, might stir a dull hack to glow. For instance, to-day's issue of all the official journals published in our English tongue would make reading full of fancy and suggestion. The machine of government, from its simplest to its most complex shape, would be observed at work, under every condition imposed by climate, race, religion, and mode of life. England is not alone a mother of nations; she is also nurse and teacher of neglected children. The file of Gazettes from America would tell, for the most part, a quiet story of contentment. From Australia the same, for our sons are all prosperous and law-abiding. But India, China, and the Eastern seas would send hints of a fortune more chequered—wars and rumours of war, plots and murder, heathen wickedness withstood and civilisation struggling forward. Eight schools have we

in Africa, whence an English Government spreads such light as government can. Cape Coast Castle, the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Capetown, Natal, the Diamond Fields, and Kaffraria, are centres of instruction for the Negro ; and by the Gazettes there published, one may follow his slow advance. Official intelligence is the skeleton of history.

I have before me a file of papers which have accumulated during a long absence from home. They are printed in English and refer to officers English-born, but they tell no affairs of our empire. There is a corner of the world, very far off and very little known, where one of our countrymen thrones as a monarch, recognised by all civilised powers, owning an exchequer, a fleet, a little army, almost a court of his own. For thirty-three years this kingdom has existed—an oasis in the desert of Eastern misrule. Wars and rebellions have shaken it ; religious fanaticism has checked it ; bigotry of doctrinaires at home has assailed it with calumny. But the little state has held on bravely, under a monarch ever armed, now with sword and now with pen, to defend his Christian mission. He is dead, but peace reigns under his successor, and jealous ignorance has ceased to rail. The little country is Sarawak, once most turbulent and most wretched of all lands—now a haven for the distressed, and a salutary pattern to the wild Malay realms about. It is watched with longing eyes by wretched millions under their sway. Most evidently, Sir James Brooke chose his position well for the revolutionising of this darkest corner of all heathendom.

Let us see what hints of news come home in the "*Sarawak Gazette*, printed and published at the Government Press, Kuching." First, observe, that though

the compositors, and probably the "readers," must be Chinamen, there is no barbarism in their work. Scarcely a misprint in all the file, the type neat and clean, spaces excellently preserved. A creditable paper indeed, and one to compare curiously with those produced under official superintendence in our smaller colonies.

Last year had brought sad tidings to Sarawak at its very outset. On January 1st, 1874, it was announced that the Rajah's only daughter and his two sons had all died on the passage to England. But before the year ran out, the kingdom had again its heir-apparent. In conspicuous type the *Gazette* proclaims: "A telegram has been received from London, announcing the birth of a son and heir to H.H. the Rajah and Ranee on the 26th of September. A salute was fired at Kuching on receipt of this important intelligence, and official communications were sent to the different out-stations, where the happy event will be celebrated in like manner." Later allusions show us that whilst the Europeans fire guns and drink healths, the Malays also assemble to feast upon this great occasion. A Datu of Muka invites all the noble persons present at the boat-races to dine with him and share his joy. It is not stated how many guests obeyed this summons. None at least could plead the lack of a wedding garment, for we hear that such superb costumes had never been beheld at a provincial boat-race. The "frowning old fort" was given up to the ladies, Malay of course, who positively dazzled the beholder.

Different was the feast spread by Tambi Sultan, a trader of Kuching. This gentleman's merry-making did not come off, and, indeed, he was so scurvily treated that the Supreme Court had to hear his wrongs.

Tambi Sultan "had issued invitations to all the klings of the vicinity, and to the head Malays of the town. On the day of the feast, when he had killed goats, pigs, fowls, etc."—the etc. makes one's mouth water—"the cook was detained by the other klings, who refused to accept his invitation on the plea that he was not one of themselves, and subscribed nothing to the mosque." There are sets, you perceive, amongst these people; but why kidnap the cook? This practical joke cost Tambi Sultan £12 10*s.*, and he claimed damages. The court laughed, and begged the Malay magistrates to interfere; which they did, and all parties shook hands.

Dipping at random into the well of quaint but suggestive fact around me, I find the record of an engineering feat which would have been honoured with the attention of special correspondents and big type on the other side the world.

All persons interested know that our largest supply of antimony comes from Sarawak; but the public may be surprised to learn that it pays to blow up a mountain there for the value of its cinnabar. Nothing less was done on the 13th of February last by the officials of the Borneo Company. They drove a corridor sixty-five feet long into the Tegora peak, and hollowed out a chamber at the end. Fifty kegs were piled therein, each containing fifty pounds of the strongest blasting powder. The fuse was lighted, and everybody withdrew for a mile or so. "It was some seconds before the sound of the explosion reached us," says a correspondent, "and so the effect was the more striking; for we saw huge boulders, as it were, boiling up, and noiselessly rolling down the mountain side. Through the top then escaped a volume of dense smoke, reminding me

of the volcanoes of Sumbawa." One side of the peak escaped, though dreadfully shattered; but the Borneo Company won 20,000 or 30,000 tons of ore, which rolled to a convenient distance. The Dyaks declare they won't stop in the white man's neighbourhood; for, if he can remove inconvenient mountains, what may they expect?

Of mines, indeed, we hear a great deal. No one has ever denied that Borneo is immensely rich in coal, but the only attempt to work her fields has been made on the islet of Labuan. Within the last two years Rajah Brooke II. has worked with energy, and reports appear from every quarter. Mr. Walters has not only opened the great field of Silantik, but he has cut a road, thirteen miles long, from the river to that mine. Mr. Houghton, Resident of Sadong, has laid down a tramway, and promises coal on the wharf at three dollars a ton before many weeks. The first cargo of Sarawak coal was shipped on January 18th of this year, the *Heartsease* carrying several hundred tons to Singapore. This is a joint speculation of the Rajah's government and the Borneo Company. In passing, we learn that there is actually a steam-launch plying on the Batang Lupar—that great stream which I recollect as so utterly barbarous, the head-quarters of murder, piracy, and all things unchristian. Verily this little state travels fast on the road to civilisation.*

But constant references forbid us to suppose that the

* At a later date, February 26th, 1876, I find important testimony to the value of Sarawak coal. Admiral Ryder came himself, in the *Vigilant*, with the *Egeria*, to try it. He carried away 350 tons. A few days after arrived H.M.S.'s *Thistle* and *Lily*, which took on board 100 to 200 tons each. The Government, thus encouraged, means to keep 200 tons always ready for the use of Her Majesty's fleet at Pinding, on the Quop river. The last visit of a

wild spirit of the Bornean savages is quite extinct. The Acting Resident of the Batang Lupar informs H.H. the Rajah that he has duly met Mr. de Haan, the Dutch Controller of Madjang, and with him has concluded a peace between the frontier tribes. Again, he reports that the Seribas Dyaks have sent him a deputation asking leave to attack the Muallangs, in revenge for a murder committed five months ago. A fine of eight jars is demanded, and, unless the murderers pay, Mr. Gueritz fears it will be impossible to restrain the Seribas. These in old time were the most dreaded of Bornean pirates. Ferocious courage, and a certain warlike ingenuity, caused their 8,000 warriors to exercise an influence quite beyond the proportion of their numbers. It was a Seribas man who led a Malay handful to attack the thousands of Chinese insurgents above Kuching, and so ruined that Celestial enterprise.

Scarcely a number of the *Gazette* but contains a report or reference to a blood-feud. Very nearly always, however, it has been incurred beyond Sarawak boundaries, and the Dyak subjects rarely quarrel among themselves. They are an independent and enterprising race, and they travel far through the woods when the harvest has been gathered. Very frequently they are murdered; for the old practices of head-hunting are kept up by Kyans and Bruni Dyaks. Some young man engaged to be married, or some mourner of a lost relation, looks upon the stranger as a God-send, prowls after him, strikes him from behind, and carries off

man-o'-war, sailing under the Union Jack, was three years before. Those who know the Eastern seas will understand the enormous value of Sarawak should its coal prove satisfactory. That now working is confessed inferior to that of the Lingga Mine, which might easily produce 300 to 400 tons a day. But a small capital is needed to open out this seam.

his head rejoicing. The murder is known, as such deeds always are in savage countries, and a vendetta follows. But blood-gold is quite understood by these people, and the nearest resident of Sarawak can generally settle the matter if he has warning. Our little kingdom has had few wars with Dyaks, but those she has waged have been crushing. Blood-gold here takes the form of jars. The greatest treasure a Dyak can understand is an unlimited quantity of "dragon jars," then "deer jars," and so on, as one may say, from diamonds to garnets. These curious vessels are earthenware, probably of Chinese manufacture. The origin of them has been lost for centuries untold, through which they have been handed down, the proudest trophy of wealth and the richest spoil of war.

Diamonds, by-the-bye, these savages have, and to me nothing is more interesting in the *Gazette* than a series of reports "communicated" by a South African digger who has wandered to Sarawak from New Rush—a weary way! His accounts are most discouraging, though excellently written by a man who evidently understands his subject, and has most qualities that win success. Notwithstanding, it is traditionary with Borneans that the Koh-i-noor was really discovered in their island, and one does not thoroughly understand how they should have learned the mere existence of that stone unless the fact be as they say. The diamonds of Pontianak were famous until the mines gave out. Very magnificent stones are seen on one Malay chief or another; but my invaluable *Gazette* informs me that the greatest, grandest, most mysterious, and most beautiful of all gems, that called the Sambas diamond, has been pronounced a crystal—the finest and whitest in existence, but—a crystal! With delight I read the

guaranteeing clauses, the protocols, despatches, and indemnities exchanged betwixt the Rajah and the Dutch governors of Sambas and Batavia. A man-o'-war was sent to receive the gem; a salute of ten guns honoured it or its master; two pangarans, or princes of the blood, ten chiefs of distinction, a commissioned officer, and twenty-four Dutch marines, kept watch and ward, by day or night, over this world's wonder. And so it steamed to Batavia, where, with equal dignity, it was sent on shore. The jewellers assembled, gave one glance, and said, "Lovely! lovely! for a crystal of quartz!" So perished another illusion, and even Mr. Emanuel's, the very latest book on precious stones, requires an erratum.

The shipping intelligence of our *Gazette* makes quite a show sometimes. The government steamers, *Sri Sarawak* and *Royalist*, pass to and fro between Singapore and Kuching, laden with mails and produce. The Rajah has his own postage-stamps now, if you please, besides his coinage. They carry passengers too, not less than six Europeans, three of them ladies, on one occasion. A third steamer was launched in Singapore last year. Trading vessels, English and Malay, junks from China, and stray men-of-war of divers nationalities, are noticed. Besides his steamers the Rajah has a fleet of gunboats; and it seems that his officers can so train Malays as to make them fit for high command. At the death of Captain Helyer Gunner Inchi Leman takes charge of the *Heartsease*, and keeps it with credit. "Inchi" corresponds with our esquire.

Sarawak has its fêtes; notably the grand regatta on New Year's Day. In the Rajah's absence all the world is invited to feast at his expense in the "Rajah's Arms,"

which establishment, as we learn incidentally, owns a Portuguese butler and quite a staff of servants. It may seem to you a light thing that Sarawak's capital should own an inn, kept by a Christian, whose wife directs the business. But to me, who knew the country, this fact tells of trade, movement, change, civilisation, so loudly, that Hadjis, mad from their pilgrimage, and savage, white-haired pirates out of work, must view that modest caravanserai with desperate hatred.

But the country is not yet ripe for all growths of our civilisation. The "Sarawak Sugar Company (Limited)" has just discharged its second and final dividend. I have no record of the first, but the second represents 41 per cent. of the liabilities—a creditable return. The "Oya Company," a provincial enterprise for the manufacture of sago, has not proved more fortunate. Its 14-horse power steam-engine and its magnificent pump are yet for sale. The saw-mill and all apparatus thereto belonging have been disposed of long ago. It seems that commercial enterprise was going rather too fast for the infant country. Sago is the staple of its trade, with minerals, and the export of timber reaches a sum increasing every year; but Malays and Dyaks are scarcely yet prepared to feed a steam-engine, which works without holidays.

Excellently written is an account of the Sadong district, contributed, probably, by its Resident, Mr. Houghton. He speaks of a country watered by mountain streams, well cultivated—as farming goes in a tropic land—inhabited by "a hard-working agricultural race. It is a sight worth seeing when the paddy is ripe, and field after field of waving crops meets the eye. The Malays are careful farmers, but not to the same extent as the Dyaks, they

appearing to look to to-day and not to-morrow; but it is rare to hear of the Sadong people being short of the great staple of the country, rice. . . . Those who have been accustomed to see in Kuching the rather wretched specimens of the Land Dyak about the bazaar would be rather surprised if they saw the same race in their homes in Upper Sadong. Many of the villages are old, but well built, and nearly all surrounded by groves of patriarchal fruit-trees; and the stock of goods in which the Dyak delights—gongs, guns, brass wire, &c.—are plentiful. The gala dresses of the women and children are covered with strings of dollars, rupees, and old Dutch coins, many dating back a hundred years or more." Here is a picture agreeable to contemplate for him who recollects how this same people was harassed out of industry, out of life itself, by savage Bruni masters only twenty years agone. No man then so mad as to grow fields of paddy, much more to deck his wife in silver; lucky might he be deemed who kept her and her children from the clutches of the tyrant. But old instincts of murder are not yet eradicated; better, perhaps—they are repressed. "Many times one is asked by the youngsters if they may take a head from some of their old enemies the Enkias, but with what success need not be told. In the head-houses, none but dry skulls are seen, taken in the wars before the government of H.H. the Rajah gave peace to the country." The products of Sadong are numerous. Beeswax comes from thence in large quantities, as do gutta-percha and india-rubber; but these last begin to fail under the reckless destruction of young trees. Rattans abound, having never been cut up to this time. Diamonds of fine water are common in the rivers, but they run small. Gold is washed

at several spots. Traces of cinnabar are to be seen, and timber of value is a nuisance.

Through all these papers hints are continually rising to show that a spirit of enterprise animates both officers and people of Sarawak. The Resident at Kaluka seems to have a mind peculiarly active. He planted tobacco, of the Java variety, on January 7th, and on May 31st cut the leaves. They measured three feet in length by fifteen inches across. Oil palm also he has tried, and after three years the seedling bears a quantity of fruit. If this is to be considered an average success, Baroness Burdett Coutts was very unfortunate; for she spent thousands in acclimatising the oil palm, and made nothing of it.

In this little state there is no suppression of the native, nor is there any foolish exaltation. He is never called "brother" nor equal, but he is quietly encouraged to understand that it rests only with himself to earn equality. On the Council of State two members must always be Malay, and we see them give their opinion with frankness and understanding. These are, at present, the Datu Bandar and the Datu Imaun, hereditary nobles. We have seen that a Malay is allowed to command a gun-boat, a position much more responsible, in effect, than any grand seat at the council board. Presently we may expect to behold them in places of equal importance on land. As yet the country is governed by Residents, who dwell in forts erected on commanding situations, above the eternal forest.

A novelty is signalled in the military system. Dyak tribes henceforward will supply a certain number of young men for five years' service in the Rangers, our police force at Kuching. Great results are expected from their passage through the ranks, where they must observe Euro-

pean wonders, must become subject to discipline, must wear clothes, and must gather from Malay comrades notions several degrees above their jungle experience. I observe that the barracks are regarded with much pride. "They look like a little town, when seen from the river below Tanah Putih. The buildings are well constructed, in four blocks. Dyaks and Malays are quartered at a distance from each other, and separate dwellings are allotted to men with either wives or families." Old Government House has been converted to the use of the Commandant, for the present Rajah lives in a handsome palace called "Astana." Its grounds are made into a Champs de Mars, and there, after drill, a spirited game of "Raga," or native football, is carried on till the retreat sounds. The Rangers have a band which performs every night. Verily Sarawak is progressing, with its brand-new and beautiful court-house, before ourselves. We have not yet risen above the foundations of our "Carey Street site."

We get hints of amusement in plenty, though the *Gazette* does not condescend to detail—it is the organ of government. So, also, we hear of burglary, gambling, murder, and suicide on a small and strictly native scale. Forts are rising, works opening, experiments trying on every side. But a long account, communicated, of a Malay marriage interests me more, for I remember the bride. Daughter, she is, of Inchi Buyong, the court writer, and her name is Dayang Isa; pretty enough, even for the charming girl who used to run across to our bungalow with duriens which we could not eat. She was then very far off her teens; and it appears that her loveliness has grown so incomparable, she has rejoiced therein to an age unusual with her countrywomen. After many suitors had been

dismissed—so we are informed—Dayang Isa accepted Abang Mahomad, a distinguished young citizen of Kuching, nearly related to Mr. Datu Tumangong himself, and also to Haji Mahomad Taha, one of our principal traders. Such a combination of aristocratic family with plutocratic enterprise Isa could not withstand, and the European community was invited to witness the sacrifice. The fast had been performed, and even the wedding ceremony, in both houses, before any strangers could be admitted. At 3 P.M. the bride was to behold her husband for the first time. Inchi Buyong behaved in the most hospitable manner, smothering his house with flowers, and providing every form of dainty—non-alcoholic—for the visitors :—our court writer is a Mussulman of the elect. Presently guests were led to the inner chamber, where, upon a daïs four feet high, the bride was seated. The special correspondent is enthusiastic on her beauty. She appears to have presented a magnificent show—her dress, silk and cloth of gold ; a coronet of gold and flowers upon her head ; her arms covered with rich bracelets from wrist to elbow. "As is the native custom, she had stained the tips of her fingers red with henna, which it takes several days to accomplish, and which is performed with much ceremony, amid family feasting. She had also coloured her eyelids with antimony, which, strange as the practice may appear, greatly added to her charms." But poor little Isa had to wait three long hours for her bridegroom without moving, "which must have fatigued her not a little," thinks the reporter. Enthusiasm so far carries him away that he wishes he had been the gentleman. At length Abang Mahomad appeared, and claimed his property straightway by placing his hand upon her head. European guests were reminded of Beauty

and the Beast. Rice was sprinkled over the two, as they sat side by side; and a little gold-dust, scraped off a ring, was placed on the forehead of each. So the performance came to an end, excepting the moral reflections of the correspondent, who considers that Isa was sacrificed like a slave. I hope she wasn't, but I respect the warmth and simple honesty of that Sarawakian *confrère*.

I have no figures as yet for estimating the revenue of 1874 in our little kingdom. On March 2nd appear the revenue returns of 1873, which contrast unfavourably with those of the previous year. It seems that the *Royalist* steamer, which earned 30,604 dollars in 1872, passed three months in dock at Singapore the year following, and made no money, whilst costing a fortune. The spring panic in Singapore severely tried Kuching traders. Gutta-percha and antimony declined in price at home, though quicksilver, on the other hand, rose. The production of this mineral is as yet in its infancy, but the time is not far off when Sarawak will supply the world with cinnabar as it now does with antimony. The actual income of 1873 amounted to 182,682 dollars, as against 210,607 dollars in 1872. I much regret to observe that the Government had to run in debt 1,817 dollars to balance its accounts. But there is abundant consolation in examining the figures. Under disbursements appear the charges for opening up those coal-fields from which great results are expected, and the large item of 34,000 dollars sunk in repairing the *Royalist* will not figure in next year's report. Kuching imported 200,510 dollars of cloth, and exported 177,016 dollars of that amount. Of foreign gold it needed only 180 dollars, but it took 8,174 dollars from its own diggings, and exported 14,000 dollars. Quicksilver was shipped to

the amount of 86,355 dollars; gutta and rubber, 230,000 dollars; edible birdsnests, 63,320 dollars; diamonds, 50,700 dollars; antimony, 100,000 dollars. The total imports of 1873 were 1,612,904 dollars, showing a decrease of 82,000 dollars. The total exports were 1,542,982 dollars, a decrease of 137,353 dollars.

The country is not growing in extent, but, from every side, the wretched and the oppressed hasten to its shelter. Kuching has 40,000 inhabitants. In 1863 it had 18,000, and in 1843, 5,000. All the population of an island in the Natuna group sent to ask assistance for emigration some months ago. From every state around, Dutch or native, people seek refuge under the English rajah.

Our *Gazette* has its suggestive word to say touching church arrangements. The close Gothic edifice is built, and of it nothing can be said, but the editor protests against Gothic sermons. He is specially warm against the manner of singing practised. "We cannot doubt," he says, "that nature has been unkind to the Chinese people at large (of whom our schoolboys principally consist), in bestowing on them the most discordant and least harmonious voices. Teaching may do much, but you cannot make a raven sing." Readers acquainted with the East will thoroughly sympathise with an editor, possessing the taste for music, condemned to listen to a choir of Chinese boys each Sunday. I do not know whether there is really any difference of anatomy between the Celestial throat and ours. Mr. Darwin notes the curious fact that crows and ravens possess every muscle of the larynx by which a nightingale produces her melody; and why they do not sing so sweetly he confesses himself unable to surmise. It may be the same problem with Chinamen, but sing they

certainly can't, and they rarely try. In fact, my experience is that the police need no further evidence of intoxication on a Chinaman's part than just the fact that he is singing. When quite sober, they never thus expose themselves.

After official news and shipping intelligence, comes a spirited account of the national sport of *tuba* fishing, pursued this year under patronage of the Datu Bandar, attended by some thousands of the population. The *tuba* is a poisonous root, the juice of which stupefies fish, and causes them to fall an easy prey. The Datu Bandar, "a perfect specimen of a native gentleman," gave the signal for the sport, by standing up in a canoe, and clapping his hands thrice. Such quantities of *tuba* were thrown in, that all the Sarawak river, a large one, was poisoned, and the biggest fish soon yielded. When the Rajah is in his capital, he always attends with the Ranee, and the fishing is, indeed, a sight worth beholding.

Another issue calls attention to an edict offering inducements to those Chinamen willing to cultivate gambier, a product so wasteful in its growth that more thickly-peopled countries have almost abandoned the culture. The Rajah offers land to any extent, free of payment, for the plantations; he promises to see that all labour contracts be fairly carried out under government inspection; that no export tax shall be levied for six years, nor, after that time, shall it exceed twenty cents the stone; that salt and tobacco, free of duty, may be imported to the gambier plantations for six years.

Six subjects of Sarawak have been murdered by Bruni Dyaks in the jungles of Barram, but redress is delayed on account of smallpox raging in that district.

Satisfactory it is to note that the plague ceases at the Sarawak frontier, owing to the resolute enforcement of vaccination.

Here I will close my citations. Something, I hope, the reader has gathered of the actual state of things in the Anglo-Malay kingdom. The contrast would be great if I set side by side with this *Gazette* the official record of affairs conducted by Dutch or Spanish governments. England should be proud of sons who rule amidst loyalty and content a race their neighbours can control by no means save burnings, slaughters, and pitiless repression.

CATCHING A WILD BEAST.

I.

"YOU want a horse to go to Alexandersfontein to-morrow? I don't think we can spare one, except Jumps. But look here! our new inspector has borrowed the green cart, to look round camp on that side, and he may as well give you a lift."

We were at Bultfontein-house, on the South African Diamond Fields. I believe there are a score of mansions built at this time, compared with which the old Residence would seem a pretentious cow-house. But, when I knew it, we were desperately proud of our dwelling, and defied even the great New Rush to show its equal. Seldom then, and never now, I should suppose, did you ask for a horse in vain. But on this occasion, as the manager explained, I must either take a cart in Dutoitspan Camp below, or share the inspector's vehicle, if I would shoot plovers for breakfast on the flats of Alexandersfontein. Of course I chose to go somewhat out of my way, and thus came to hear the story which I propose to tell you.

At the hour conventionally known as daybreak in those early climes, we started. The faintest hue of grey

overspread the sky, and a man unused to Cape travelling would have thought it madness to drive over Bultfontein digging in such a light. But one learns there a fatalism beyond that of Turk or Fellah, and without an extra throb I lit the early pipe and took my seat behind the stalwart "boy," who had to pilot me amongst the "claims" of Bultfontein. At the bottom of the hill we stopped to pick up the inspector. I don't know why I should not name him, for my tale is true, every word, so far as memory serves me; but British custom is against the naming of names, and I will call the excellent fellow MacDavid, so that those who know may recognise.

MacDavid was a short, wiry man, such as recruiting-sergeants love to enrol for the light cavalry. He had a face burnt red on cheeks and brow, almost black on temples. The grinding dust of the veldt had roughened it all over; a stiff black beard, dashed with grey, girdled it about; and his eyes had that steely brightness which I have always noticed in men who laugh and fight with equal heartiness. I know nothing of Inspector MacDavid's family or condition, for we never met, unless for a smile and a nod, after this occasion. But in the gallant corps to which he belonged, and belongs still, I trust—the Frontier Police—there are not a few privates who could, if they would, show their quarterings.

He took his place beside me under the tilt of the "cart," and we bowled along behind a pair of the company's horses round the outskirts of the camp. The inspector kept his eyes about him, asking questions of this matter or that. I said, after a while:

"They say your men dislike this police work in camp?"

"Well," he answered, "it's not surprising; they didn't enlist for any such service. The proof of it is, that we are a mounted corps, and yet I have to borrow your friend's horses to take me round my beat. The men don't understand that it's just a temporary service: they call each other Bobby, and have a score of jokes. Our horses are eating their heads off in the big stable yonder.—Isn't that a drinking-shop, under the tree?"

I explained how the tent in question was occupied by a man to whom all this land, and many a mile around, once belonged, and how the authorities dealt with him leniently. And then I said:

"Surely your men find excitement enough in camp? This place is not so peaceful as it was twelve months ago."

"Excitement?" repeated MacDavid. "It might be exciting for London peelers, but not for the frontier police; our fellows want it hot and strong, like 'Cape Smoke' (Cape brandy). Half of them went through the Coranna war, and grumbled at that. Our proper business is to guard the frontier against those little imps of Bushmen, who are the natural enemies of the human race, white or black. A man who has campaigned with them is difficult to suit with excitement."

"But you haven't Coranna wars every year," I said, "nor even brushes with a Kaffir kraal. Come now, Mr. MacDavid, the frontier police are soldiers, of course, but they are policemen, too, and they catch even pickpockets sometimes upon the veldt."

"I don't know about pickpockets. They'd certainly catch anyone they looked after; but our crimes don't run in that line. Horrors are done in this lonely veldt that beat all the fancy of civilisation."

We had skirted round the purlieus of Bultfontein, and once more struck the road which led me to my hunting-grounds. The sun was up. Each tall ant-hill beside the track threw its long blue shadow over the thin grass. No object more striking—neither tree, nor rock, nor water—broke the grey level. Wave beyond wave of colourless herbage the veldt stretched round, until it melted hazily beneath the flat-topped barren hills. The blue shadow of our rapid cart danced beside us. Could men, born in such a desert landscape—not Bedouins, but Christian men—conceive the crimes that we in Europe know? I had seen something of the boers, and had marvelled at their simplicity, whilst recognising that it was not always amiable. But they have no such passions, no such desires or wants, as lead to crime with us. They know hunger but as a feeling of their black servants, greed of wealth only as a passion of those strange men who dig and dig for stones with which, a while ago, they plastered their mud cottages. Of love they are capable most certainly; but in its best, its sacred form, seldom in its lowest. Of course I had heard stories. But MacDavid's tone seemed to suggest a sort of crime differing from that stolid and matter-of-fact immorality which Cape Town judges are sometimes called upon to punish.

"You have had some rough police work?" I said.

"It was I arrested Groethode," he replied; adding, after an instant, "Perhaps you've not heard of that man? But ask Mr. F—— up at the Residence, and he'll tell you stories to make your hair rise."

"I would rather hear yours," I answered.

And he told it me. No doubt I shall make some

errors in transcribing it here, after four years have elapsed. I am not even certain that my ghastly hero's name was Groethode. But Cape readers will excuse me when they observe that I have at least got all my important facts correct, and of that I feel assured.

"I had served five years in the Eastern province," began MacDavid, "when I was transferred to the Colesberg district. They gave me a fortnight to report myself in, and I determined to ride the distance, crossing the Drakenburg mountains. On the fifth day out we rather lost ourselves, the Totty groom and I. After wandering for a few hours we came to a kloof—what they should call in England a cleft. You know the gap by Belmont, through which the road passes from this to Hopetown? It was just as lonely, just as bare as that, if you could fancy the valley before it was inhabited. And at the mouth stood a boer farmhouse."

MacDavid's comparison enabled me to realise the scene. I could paint the long desert flat, blazing with sunshine, and awhirl with dust. Though called pasture land, it bears no grass. Rugged bush of heath, dwarf tuft of camomile, great bulbous roots of amaryllis, spring at intervals, and everywhere the sand shows red between. Above the dreary waste huge hills tower suddenly, rising from a burnt heap of pebbles. Down below, brown and ragged spikes of herbage frizzle in the sun, but on the rock there is not foothold for a weed. Vultures lumber up to perch upon the top; hawks swing and circle rapidly, their shadows flitting over the sand. On the little tufts of heath, lizards countless lie and bask. For miles and miles behind is grey desert; there is not a tree, not a break in

the landscape; only hills on the far horizon, blue and misty at this distance, but in fact as hard and pitiless and baked as those in front.

And the farmhouse at entrance of the kloof! With an unconscious imitation these boers build to match the scenery; bare and colourless are their houses as the rocks above. The farmer steps from his rude front door and finds himself upon the veldt. He has no garden, nor does he want one, not even for vegetables. A half-dozen peach trees, may be, green some sheltered corner of the kloof. Not a touch of paint, nor any ornament, sets off his house, inside or out. Days come and go therein, and bring no news. He has actually no knowledge of the world's affairs; months and years pass uncounted. The giant father becomes old and dies, but giant sons succeed. The girls do their courting at midnight, in the old Dutch fashion, with a lover who gallops in from twenty miles away. Presently they one by one announce the intention to get married, and their father gives them a few square miles of veldt for dowry; which, when the old man dies, his sons, if strong enough, will take away. The boer saves no money. His father left him twenty pounds, and that he leaves in turn. Never in life has he wanted anything, and his existence is a standing negation of this nineteenth century, whereof we are so proud.

All this passes through my mind as I recall MacDavid's story. The digression is not needless, but probably you think it long enough. He went on:

"In the house I found an old woman, who appeared, as I remembered afterwards, struck all of a heap by my appearance. I was in uniform. But she gave me coffee, of course, and said breakfast would be ready soon. There was

a settle by the door, protected by a plank from the draught, and I sat down on it. After talking with the old woman for awhile, I got drowsy, and so, I think, did she. You know how boers sleep, especially the women. It was very hot.

"Presently there was a clatter in the stoop, the door opened, and I jumped up. 'Take those crackers, and wash them!' said a gruff voice in Dutch. A big man, a giant, was standing in the middle of the room, with the leather breeches in his hand. The old woman made a movement, I suppose, for he turned suddenly, and looked me in the face. There was a stare in his eyes which your regular policeman would have recognised at once, I daresay, but it only seemed a strange look to me. I said something in Dutch, and he answered roughly, 'God has brought you, uncle!' going with that to the back room, where I saw a couple of Totty women cutting at a sheep. He threw the crackers into a corner, took the knife and hacked off three or four ribs, tearing them from the carcass, pitched them to the women, and came back, his hands all bloody."

"Was this Groethode?" I asked.

"The very man! A giant he was, a huge hill of flesh. His mother, that I'd been talking to, was every inch of six feet high, though stooped with age. Groethode measured nearly seven feet, if not quite. You know to what a monstrous height these boers run, but when the trial came he topped witnesses and jury by half a head. We sat down——"

"But what sort of face had he?"

"Oh, fair, you know, with a big rough beard all round, like the rest of them. Large blue eyes, looking wild, and a trick of moving his eyebrows up and down—what people

would call a handsome man, but with a queer expression. I rather liked him. He had great spirits for a boer—indeed, I thought him rather drunk—slapping his mother on the back, and throwing the mutton-bones at his Totty women as fast as he cleaned them. He made me laugh a good deal, though he didn't laugh himself. I had never seen a boer like that, and I thought, if the Colesberg people should be as lively, I'd made a good exchange.

"When I came to have the police reports, a few days afterwards, I found that Groethode bore a most suspicious character. That crime was rife in the country I very soon had evidence. First came news of a man and horse pitched headlong into a ravine; but when I got to investigate, the thing resolved itself into a mere accident. Then, at a wedding feast, half-a-dozen guests were said to have been pounded like clay, but no complaints arrived, and even when I called to ask—silence! Just a common quarrel! After that happened a terrible affair, which I won't say much about, for there was a lady in it who's living still. But no accusations! In fact, I found that terror—terror of what or of whom I could not quite make out—ruled the country. Every man of English blood in town kept on saying to me, 'It's Groethode! Will you have the veldt depopulated before you hang him?' I couldn't go to the club nor to Martin's bar, but they put Groethode on my back. The boers, when in town, didn't say much, but they looked a lot. I got regularly vexed about it.

"Perhaps he took alarm; anyway he set off for a hunting trip to the Transvaal, and we had peace for a matter of three months. There wasn't a report in all my district, except of cattle-lifting, and that. But Groethode

came back, and the row began again. I declare that anyone who had eyes could see his return in the boers' looks. Whatever he'd done up yonder, it hadn't taken the devil out of him, and our doctor soon noticed the difference. I'd long since given up any doubts about Groethode, and no man on the country-side hated him as I did. The magistrate and I had many a talk, thinking how we could get evidence, for all the boers were silent as mice. If anyone had told me that I myself, at that moment, held damning proofs against him, I should have stared.—But here we are at Alexandersfontein, and the plovers are walking about yonder like barn-door fowls with their legs painted."

"You see they're not impatient," I said. "Please finish your story."

"Well, one evening I sat in Martin's bar, which is not exactly a bar, of course, but a sort of club. Martin put his head in at the door, and said, 'A word, captain!' That proved to be the word we had been wanting for seven years. He told me there were two tramping bricklayers in the public room, who had crossed from the Eastern province. Upon the way they had seen a skeleton, with clothes about it, lying under a cliff. Of course it was my business to make inquiries, and I sent for them. They proved to be Africanders, and knew quite well where they had been, and what they had met with. I supposed the poor dead man to be one of those who perish every year upon the lonely veldt, unknown and unmissed. But as they went on with their tale, a thought struck me. I didn't say anything, but just brought them to a map. It was as I thought! The body lay in the kloof, beside Groethode's house. The men had stopped there for a drink of coffee.

Lucky for them that he was not at home! The old woman pressed them to stay, and when she heard they had come up the kloof, wanted to—well, I don't wish to be uncharitable, but Cape smoke does no one any good, does it? and if those men happened to be teetotallers, so much the better for them, of course.

"I was never so excited after Kaffir or Bushman! The men had passed three days before, and what couldn't Groethode do in that time? I got a search-warrant from the magistrate, and started with six men long before daylight, taking one of the bricklayers along with us. Just after sunrise we reached the kloof, entering it on the farther side. Our guide led us straight, and we found the skeleton in a hollow, amongst pebbles heaped against a cliff. Vultures and jackals had picked it clean, but they had not carried the clothing out of that hole. We found a jacket shapely enough, and the remains of a 'jumper,' and long stockings. The boots had been too much for bird or beast, and they still hung to the skeleton feet. Of trousers there was no sign. I just drew up a report of the attitude in which the body lay, put the whole into a sack, and off we went again.

"We took the bones to our doctor first thing, and I went to breakfast. Ten minutes afterwards he ran across.

"'That man's been murdered!' cries he.

"'So I thought,' I said, and went on with my breakfast. 'How?' The doctor was a nervous man, and I wanted to cool him down.

"'Slug shot!' he says, half sullenly.

"'Where?' says I.

"'Through the back! Round the top of the trousers.'

"'How long ago, do you think?'

"'That poor fellow's breeches were spoilt before your time, I should say. Probably he has been two years in the kloof.'

"I hadn't thought of it! I know it struck me like a bullet. Two years, mark you, two years before, within a day or two, Groethode had brought home crackers to be washed. And he had come from the veldt, where crackers don't grow, that ever I heard of. As it flashed upon me that the corpse was dressed, except for trousers, the case seemed clear as daylight, and I left the doctor there with my breakfast.

"It was no use moving the magistrate in a touch-and-go business like that. My men were tired. I ordered out a Kaffir groom, who would be more than a match for all the Hottentots about Groethode's farm, and started, with only the search-warrant in my pocket. Half a mile away I sent my boy back to fetch a Totty; they overtook me long before I reached the kloof. Towards four in the afternoon we got to the cottage, the door of which, as usual, stood open, and by the fireplace sat Frow Groethode. I asked pleasantly after her son, and learned that he had but returned that morning, and had gone away again afoot an hour before. With that I went through the house, and locked the door looking on the yard. The women were all inside. I posted my Kaffir boy to watch, and when the Totty had hobbled all the horses he could find, brought him in to interpret. Five minutes sufficed to gather evidence enough to hang twenty men. Frow Groethode could do no more than cry—these big women are like that—but the Totties, if one had believed them, would have made out Groethode more fearful than an ogre, more devilish than the fiend himself. I brought them back to the only case

we had, and they told me that he was wearing the crackers to this day, that his mother had washed and mended them. They knew all about that murder in the kloof, even to its details. The man was working at Filjie's (Villiers') near by, about fourteen miles off. Groethode found him picking peaches in the kloof, and told him to go home. When he turned, this incarnate devil shot him through the back, stripped off his leathern trousers, hid the body, and came to breakfast with me!

"Suddenly Smike ran in, and reported Groethode coming from the kloof. I went to the door and saw my man, still far away, trudging over the sand; his giant form loomed monstrous in the declining light. He carried something on his shoulder. Looking round for Smike, whose eyes were better than most telescopes, I saw Frow Groethode just grasping the ancient roer, with which, no doubt, so many foul deeds had been done. My men looked on quite carelessly—you know how unaccountable these niggers are—whilst the Totty servants grinned with all their lips. I disarmed the old woman, and she went moaning to the fireplace. Smike told me, at a glance, that the man approaching had a spade and pick across his shoulder. We had still ten minutes. I tied the black women, and gave them in charge to Moses, their countryman. Smike brought round two hobbled horses to the corner, where stood our own beasts, and saddled them. Then I gave Frow Groethode into his charge, and stepped out to meet her son.

"He knew me well enough, and cried, 'Heaven brings you, uncle!'

"'At last!' I said. 'Groethode, you are my prisoner! —Stand! If you come a step nearer, or an inch, I drop you as you dropped Filjie's man in the kloof!' He stood

about twenty yards off. His eyebrows moved up and down like a wild beast's. But he said nothing.

"'Moses!' cried I, 'bring me the hobbled horses.' He brought my own and had to go back. Meanwhile, Groethode and I stood opposite each other. In the red light, his twisted face was horrible to look at, and his shadow stretched twenty yards behind. Suddenly I saw Groethode's eyes move and fix. I glanced aside, and sprang back. Just in time. The old woman's bullet hummed past me, and raised the dust fifty yards beyond. Like a flash Groethode leaped forward, but my rifle covered him. He stopped at ten feet distance, and walked back at my command, whilst Smike held that terrible old woman.

"Then Moses brought up a horse, and Groethode mounted. The boys lifted up his mother, who was very feeble, and we set off, the dreariest cavalcade that ever crossed the veldt. There was a moon, luckily. It was near midnight when we reached the first house, and then I tried to have my prisoner handcuffed; but not a man would touch him. They stood round in their night clothes, pale as the moonlight, and Groethode looked down on them, grinning and working his brows. Not a man would touch him, and I dared not lay down my carbine. But they agreed to put the old woman, who was almost spent, to bed, and sent off a boy full gallop to fetch my police. I would not go farther. Three hours we sat in the saddle, glaring at each other, before the police came. He asked to dismount, but I wouldn't let him. It was the weariest guard I ever kept.

"The moon was nearly down, when we heard the gallop of my men across the misty veldt. They came nearer and nearer. I made up my mind for a bolt, but Groethode

seemed much easier, observing how fearful they all were of him. I put my carbine within two inches of his arm, and swore I'd drive a bullet through it if he didn't submit to be handcuffed, and he knew I'd keep my word. So he bore it like a lamb; only when my sergeant, who was a big fellow, had done tying his legs beneath the horse, he just seemed to let his hands drop on him, and poor Thorpe went down like a bullock. We left him there and galloped home. A month afterwards Groethode was hanged, with eight murders sworn against him, and many another suspected."

"I hope you'll have no such captures to make on these fields," I said.

"I almost hope not; but you see, when a man thinks of adventures like that, life here seems a bit dull. What d'you think that incarnate devil's first crime was? He had a bit of a quarrel with a neighbour, so small a thing that the man accepted a supje when they met along the road. Groethode made him drunk, plastered his head with tar, and set it alight! He was not eighteen then! Good-bye, sir, and I wish you sport with the plovers!"

MY KAFFIR CHAWLES.

He was the best "boy" on the diamond-fields in my time. Whether for appearance, demeanour, or utility, Chawles had no rival. A chief he was, the son and grandson of chiefs. Kaffir dignities are hereditary so far alone as the heir can keep them, and three generations of sovereignty make an honourable boast among Zulus. Chawles came to the diamond-fields with Paddy Rolleston, who first discovered our mines, to speak strictly. Before his time they had picked up gems on the surface, at Cawood's Hope, Pniel, and other spots, but they had not thought of digging. When Rolleston called for volunteers in Natal, his invitation had been heard by Chawles's father, then upon the point of "treking," or migrating, into Nomansland, the waste country bordering upon Kaffraria. This young chief and a score of comrades boldly followed Rolleston across the Boer country, and, as is known by all who care for the history of our fields, they dug for him half a pint of gems. He refused £20,000 for them at Capetown, but was glad to accept £4,000 in England. At his leaving, the Zulus scattered, and, after many adventures, Chawles drifted into my service.

For a chief he was the most ragged rascal to be found

in camp, the blackest and the biggest-mouthed. It was awful to see Chawles grin. He threw his head well back as a preparation, and his sooty face opened right across like a trap, showing an ivory set of dominoes, clean-ranged in a pink-silk case. From the cavern thus yawning issued a series of fine bass notes, ringing, sonorous, joined each to the last by a chuckle. Chawles resembled the conventional negro only in his face. His character was grave and severe. The unaccountable ways of white men made him laugh, but I never saw his famous grin provoked by any other experience.

He was very ragged, as I have said, but the mere fact of wearing clothes was a distinction. No other Zulu about the camp sported anything more serious, in my time, than a smile and a jackal's brush. Chawles wore a flannel shirt, out at elbow, and a pair of trousers, out at knee. But he kept my tent in such fashion as made the neighbours envy me—always grave, always on hand, always so neatly black. For six months I never knew that the waste ground at the back of my tent was a Zulu meeting-place, where a half score of "masterless-men" smoked intoxicating bark all day and night, sucking, and coughing, and rolling on the ground in ecstasy, as is Kaffir fashion. Chawles was the only chief of their people for many hundred miles about, and he ruled all Zulus in camp. Within hearing of my call he held his state, and pronounced ponderous discourses half an hour long. The strangest speech in the world is Kaffir. Its peculiarity lies in the "clicks." Before beginning to talk you must press the tongue to the palate; then twist your mouth awry, and let the air in sharply, as old-fashioned people do when they urge a horse. The result is "click," or something that approaches

that sound. Repeat the operation quickly on the other side, and you get "clack;" draw back the tongue from the teeth, and you have the sound "tza." "Click, clack, tza" has a very tremendous significance in South Africa, if you intersperse a few syllables of "baby talk." Seriously speaking, the "clicks" in some Kaffir tongues are the very strangest accompaniment of speech to which travel has introduced me. In one language there are no less than thirty-two, all different, all indispensable for sense. Put a click where a clack should be, or a clack for a cluck, and the consequences may be most disastrous. This difficulty it is, as I'm told, which has routed our missionaries.

Chawles had means of communication with his home, and from time to time he told me scraps of news. They generally related to successful raids upon Adam Kok's people. That chieftain had led his tribe of Griquas into Nomansland just about the time of the Zulu migration. The Capetown government strongly represented to Kok the madness of carrying his flocks and herds outside of civilised jurisdiction, but the old chief persisted. Of course the wild Kaffirs and broken tribes of Nomansland robbed the Griquas with a high hand. I have forgotten how many hundred head of cattle Chawles boasted his own people to have lifted, but it was enormous. I asked him once if the victims offered no resistance. He laughed scornfully. When could a score of Bastard Hottentots stand against a single Kaffir?

One day Chawles came to me with the very longest face that ever Zulu showed. Said he—to translate his amazing lingo—"I must go home, baas. My second wife's dead!"

I didn't know he had even a first, and said so. "I

think I had five wives," he answered. "The last three I've never seen, but this woman was married to me before I left Natal."

I didn't want to lose him, and replied, "I'm very sorry, Chawles, but if she's dead there's an end of that wife. You can't have seen her for three years, and you have four still."

"But I must go to the burying," he said; "I am a chief with my people, and they expect me." I saw it was a question of setting a good example, and yielded. You can't argue a point of etiquette, savage or civilised. Besides, I knew my man. Chawles went, and he was away six months. One night, returning to my tent, which had improved itself into a frame-house of canvas by that time, there stood my Zulu boy, the palest nigger, the most woe-begone in camp. His flannel shirt was a mere memorial of grandeur departed; his trousers all one hole. On his stalwart right arm an enormous scar, fast healing, but ugly to behold. He said, with the ghost of his monstrous grin, "I come back, baas!"

"And I'm very glad to see you, Chawles! Come in!"

He came in, fetched me the brandy, made tea, and went about his duties as usual. After casting up the day's notes, I called him to hear his adventures, with especial relation to the scar. He told me all, leaning against a chair, with a half-pint of neat spirits before him, which he gulped like water, and was none the worse. I shall not try to render the story in his own language, for the good fellow's English would be almost as difficult to set down as the clicks of his native Kaffir. In plain words the narrative ran as follows, for I thought it worth noting at the time. Confirmation will be found in government reports.

He walked all the way from Griqualand to Nomansland,

crossing the tail of the Drakenberg mountains. I have mentioned that the Zulu kraals under his father's sovereignty had *treked* thither into the immediate neighbourhood of Adam Kok's pastures. All the "bad Kaffirs," as Chawles called them, had been attracted thither by the appearance of the Griquas, a wealthy people, semi-civilised, belonging to those Bastard Hottentot tribes whom the Kaffirs look on as their natural prey. Rich immigrants who can't fight have a bad time of it in all countries, but old Kok was simply mad, as the Government told him, to carry his flocks and herds into the wolf's very den. Besides, he himself weighed twenty stone or so, and he got drunk before he left his bed. Things went as everybody foresaw. Kaffirs stole the Griqua cattle and beat their herdsmen. They ruined all attempts at cultivation, and carried off the little Griquas for slaves.

Chawles knew very well where to find his father's settlement, and in six weeks he reached the place described. Traversing a mountain spur, well wooded, he expected to see the Zulu kraals from the edge of it; but on emerging from the trees no such sight was visible. Chawles looked round. Smoke hung over all the plain, rising here and there as from a chimney. Far away, through the mist, he thought to see a moving cloud of dust, such as cattle-lifters raise on their hurried march. But there was nothing alive where his home should have been.

Chawles felt very sad—"much sick," as he expressed it; but such a sudden desolation did not strike him, a savage, as it would have struck us. Grieved he was, and surprised, but not dumfoundered, as would have been an Englishman, finding a smoky desert where his home had lain. If a tribe live by plunder, by plunder it may expect

to die ; and this rudimentary principle is understood, if not honoured, amongst the Kaffirs. Stealing carefully along, Chawles reached the largest kraal, a heap of smouldering ashes. Some dead lay around, both men and women ; a horrid smell hung on the air. Whilst turning the corpses over, recognising one familiar face at least, he became aware of a movement on the lonely plain. Chawles looked up and saw a group of horsemen galloping towards the spot. A mile behind lay the wood, crowning a slope ; a mile to left a timbered creek. For this shelter he made at topmost pace, throwing away the good rifle I had given him, and all that could impede his running. The horsemen pursued, shouting. They began to fire long before he reached the trees, their bullets spattering all round amongst the dust. Not a moment to spare had Chawles, when, panting and almost "beat," he gained the cover. By their shouts, their clothes, and their burly forms, he recognised the race of his pursuers. On the diamond-fields we knew very well, and respected, the Bastard Hottentots, though—or because—they retain little of their ancestors, not even their language. Chawles, a Zulu chief, could hardly believe that Griquas should be actually chasing him; but the amazing truth grew visible—tangible almost. They even left their horses, and entered the wood after him, but there Chawles was at home. He hid himself easily enough, and after awhile they gave up the pursuit.

My boy wandered on, more sick than ever, and perplexed by these awful signs. What might not happen when Hottentots followed after Kaffirs, and Kaffirs ran ? Without food, and in great tribulation, he dragged along, in hopes to find some fugitive from the ruined kraals. But such signal shouts as Chawles ventured to raise echoed through

the woods without reply. At length, when dark settled down, he hit upon a cave and took refuge in it. With nothing to eat, and afraid to light a fire, Chawles sat and mourned his tribe until sleep overpowered him. So miserable he grew, and so daunted by the perils round, that pride of birth and pride of his Zulu race were all forgotten. He wished himself back upon the diamond-fields, in my menial but comfortable service. I have Chawles's word for it.

May one single moral be permitted to a traveller who has dwelt in very far countries, has lived very hard, and who has worn out his fancies as his prejudices? I will put what I have to say in one sentence: Nowhere are the joys of savage life more apparent than among Zulus; nowhere are the savage virtues more prominent; but give the Zulu man a taste of civilisation, of law and settled order, he is foremost to uphold a system he can scarcely comprehend, and to abandon the delights of independent action. It is not true that any savage race or people of the world have a love of fighting for fighting's sake—observe that I say people, not class, for I am acquainted with the Malay pirates. Show them means of getting a livelihood peacefully, they would be pleased to take it. Sometimes other causes intervene, as in America. A thousand tribes of savages pursue the antique system of theft and murder for their wants, but be sure they do not like it—not, that is, when peril attends the venture. Love of danger for danger's sake is quite a modern and civilised fancy. No savage ever so much as conceived it. A little thought will show you that he could not understand such an idea.

So Chawles, hungry and tired, thought wistfully of the elysian fields, and the police thereon, till he fell asleep. With a start he awoke, when two persons were entering the

cave. Their bare limbs, shining in the moonlight, showed him they were Kaffirs, and a glance told them to be women. Softly he uttered the call of his tribe, but at the sound they ran away moaning. He shouted after them, and named himself by his own "strong names," which enemies would not repeat. After awhile, two girls came out from the dark bush furtively. At a distance they examined Chawles; then, running up, they threw themselves on his big chest and piteously cried. The last survivors of that Zulu clan were two half-sisters of Chawles, whom he had left as children. They had been washing by the stream when the Griquas came down.

Such a story was that the girls told that we diggers could hardly believe it afterwards. As for Chawles, he thought the world at an end. But official reports confirm the tale. Adam Kok and his Griquas had endured theft and outrage for years, petitioning the English government, which could not attempt to protect them, and complaining to the Kaffir chiefs. At length, one day, old Kok kept sober, and he called his clan around him. "The Kaffirs have left us nothing but our lives and our horses," he said; "let us mount and die!"

The Griquas were desperate. Ten years' life among wars and rumours of wars had probably stirred the savage "old man" within them. They numbered several who had served in the frontier police, and these drilled the others. Next time a party of Kaffirs came down to harry their few cattle remaining, the Griquas pursued, routed their foe, re-took the herds, and killed the raiders. The Kaffirs—they were Basutos—went to avenge their friends, and suffered an overwhelming defeat. A great discovery that was for Adam Kok and his people! They found that Bastard

Hottentots could meet Kaffirs in the field, and beat them. Some wished to rest upon their laurels, but old Kok felt a late prompting of ambition. He invaded the Basuto kraals, killed two hundred warriors in pitched battle, took all their herds, burnt their villages, and perceived a great future. This extraordinary old man did not ride, since no horse could carry him, but from a litter he marshalled his troops. The broken Kaffir tribes of Nomansland he met, defeated, and exterminated, one after another. His Griquas caught their leader's spirit. Tough fights they had ; but the immense advantage horsemen enjoy upon a country like that, when the foe, undisciplined and undrilled, has only muzzle-loading arms, gave them certain victory. Plenty of Kaffirs there are, even in Nomansland, who ride superbly, but they made a small proportion ; nor were any of them used to fight on horseback. Adam Kok, the drunken old Griqua chief, whom all despised, showed amazing talent for war. Up and down, on every side, he marched his cavalry, killing all before him, till Nomansland threatened to become a desert. Meanwhile, the Griqua kraals were filled with slaves, and beef was a drug amongst them.

The Zulus of Chawles's clan watched this astonishing revolution with curiosity. Zulus regard themselves as the supreme effort of the Creator. Scarcely will they admit the white man their superior in war, for they have never met him. Looking down from this lordly level, they fail to see much difference between a Griqua and a Basuto, a Coranna and a Fingo. For your Zulu, other Kaffirs and Bastard Hottentots are all alike beneath notice. It seems that they paid actually no attention, except of curiosity, when Adam Kok was overrunning all the territories round hem. That he should think of attacking themselves

seemed an idea too wild for aught but laughter. It is even stated by English commissioners sent up, that Zulus joined the Griqua regiments, with the full approval of their chiefs. But old Adam Kok ceased to drink. He had found another stimulant, much more exciting than rum. After laying waste and exterminating every other clan around, he looked at the Zulus, who had been bitterest of all against his people. The fighting instinct, too, had begun to move his warriors. Old Kok states to the Capetown government that he could not resist his brigadiers and colonels, so mad they grew under the war fever. A month of unbroken triumph had thus changed the people whom their missionaries had declared with enthusiasm to be thoroughly Christianised! An attack on the Zulus was determined, and it broke out two days before Chawles marched home.

In such warfare the beginning has a form invariable. The Griquas trooped out and seized their enemy's cattle, driving off two thousand head, and killing the herdsmen who showed fight. So ended the first day. There was rage and madness in the kraal! But no one supposed that Kok would wish to go farther. Five hundred Zulus went upon the war-trail to recover their cattle, and to take as many of the enemy's as might be. So the homesteads were left almost defenceless. In the heat of the next day, five hundred Griquas at the least debouched from the woods around, and made a dash. Few there were to receive them, and those unprepared. Defenders and fugitives, men, women, and children, all were killed, not without fight, but almost helplessly. Only these two girls escaped, as I have said. Then the kraals were plundered and burnt to the ground.

Such the story Chawles heard. He listened to it in

amazement and indignation beyond speech to express. When it was borne in upon him that a band of Bastard Hottentots had actually crushed a Zulu clan, that his father and mother were killed, and all his male relatives, except two brothers who had led the five hundred on their cattle-raiding expedition, my boy's first thought was of revenge. The panic-stricken girls could tell him but vaguely where the warriors of the tribe had gone; but he left them at midnight, in the cave, and followed. No doubt but Kaffir women would find food in roots and weeds to last till he came back.

Leaving the wood, though it was full moon, he travelled toward Adam Kok's pastures. All the long valley was bathed in light. He saw the faint smoke curling above his home, and the deserted meadows which had been full of cattle. All round the pale-grey sea of grass rose misty hills and woods. One red fire, at a distance, told that the Griquas had not all departed. Very lonely Chawles felt on the plain, as he hurried along at the Kaffir trot towards the grey slope ahead. At length he breasted it, and down the other side, across more plains, through woods and creeks, until, at dawn, the homesteads of the Griquas lay before him. But the moon had long since vanished, and such mists had risen that he could not see a yard before. The marvellous instinct of the savage had guided him true, but now it failed him. He could do nothing until daylight had dispelled the fog. He followed the lay of the land, and found timber as expected. Under that cover Chawles lay down and slept as a nigger only sleeps.

Two hours after, the tumult of a great fight roused him —crack of rifles, shout of men, and ponderous thud of horses galloping. He ran into the open. Some score of Zulus

came fleeing past, mounted Griquas in pursuit. All up the valley, half a mile that he could see, corpses lay thickly, all naked, all Zulu. Chawles was brawnier than most of his tribe, and he wore clothes like a Griqua. A fugitive, in passing, threw his last assegaï, and ripped my boy's arm from shoulder to elbow. Another instant and he was run down. Not a man reached the timber. All were overtaken and killed. Before Chawles could utter one defiant versicle of his Zulu war-song, he had to run for life back into the wood.

Such was the story he told me. The fine fellow had led his sisters bravely through a thousand perils, and had regained my tent. He brought them in, two superb specimens of young savage beauty. In an hour's time I had found ladies pleased to take charge of them, and before two months were out they had both married Griquas! Not of Adam Kok's tribe, however!

As for Chawles, he remained with me until I left the fields. So improbable his story was considered that the poor fellow obtained credence from no one until we had it on official authority that the government found itself obliged to interfere in Nomansland. Adam Kok developed into a great conqueror, and the proud Kaffirs abjectly prayed for British officers to restrain him. Never was there stronger instance to prove that "a worm will turn," and that you "should not push your enemy against a wall."

NOTE.—This story will explain to a puzzled public why the death of Adam Kok was telegraphed, in large type, some weeks since for the information of Europe. He had made himself not only famous, but an actual "question."

A RING IN OPALS.

In the autumn of 1866 I chanced to be travelling in that vast and roadless forest which stretches between the gold country of Mosquito and the mountains of Camasca. My sole companion was a handsome but headstrong peon, who regaled me from time to time with the story of his exploits in the filibuster war. I gathered that he was a Honduran, and had served under Guardiola, the "Tiger of Honduras," as people called him. Such a service is no recommendation, but he did his duty well towards me.

On a dull and sombre evening, after a long march under the endless shadow of the forest, we came to a rancho, all lonely and ruinous. We stood in a little clearing, where once, no doubt, had been a garden. Wild cane and creepers and convolvulus overgrew it now, for the merciless war of these unhappy countries had passed by the spot. There we decided to halt for the night. Guliermo led the cattle off for water and grass, since mules will not eat corn, and I tore down a yard or two of laths to build my fire. Scarcely had the wood lighted, when my ears caught a dull thud of horses' hoofs. To sound in the black ooze of leaves there must be heavy men on them. I slipped quietly aside. In another moment two strangers

appeared amongst the trees, vague and misty in the twilight. They halted instantly, observing my saddles and packages. The foremost drew his pistol, and cried in Mexican Spanish, "Who is here?"

"Gente de Paz!" I returned from my tree.

"Nary durned thief in this land but calls himself a man of peace!" muttered the second horseman.

I stepped forward. "You are American?" I asked, and held out my flask straightway. "Thanks!" replied the chief man, in English unmistakable. "We have some Bourbon you'll be glad to taste. And if you've no objection, we'll join camps, for the storm is coming down." Without more words he pushed through the oil-plants and the canes towards me.

I never saw a face that good Queen Bess might better have loved to look upon. His brows were strongly marked, and his eyes bore the keen strong gaze of a lion. Handsome features too had the stranger, but those eyes so drew attention that one scarcely marked the rest. His costume was striking: a short, heavy jacket of Guatemalan wool, edged with a gaudy check and a long parti-coloured fringe; trousers of strong linen, girt with a belt of red leather, in which hung pistol and knife; long boots, with spurs of silver, weighing each a pound. His horse was superbly caparisoned. I thought to recognise the class of man. I judged him that peculiar product of the States, a sportsman, or, as we should say, gambler. The other one was evidently a servant, and he proceeded to his duties, whilst the master sat upon a log and aided me with supper.

The dusk settled swiftly down whilst we talked. Presently, Guliermo's white dress glimmered among the

trees. He came towards the fire silently, surveying with critical eye the fine horses munching their corn beside it. Our new comrade turned, so that the mozo could see his features. For an instant he stood motionless, gazing wild-eyed; then, with an inarticulate cry, sprang forward, his machete upraised, and every white tooth gleaming under his moustache. I leaped in front, as did the stranger's servant. We threw Guliermo down, and tied him fast with a halter, he raving and biting the while. The frightened horses plunged at their lariats; Jake swore without intermission; flaming embers were thrown about; but through all this confusion the lion-like eyes were fixed derisively upon my negro. He screamed with all the violence of Creole passion; but when we had tied him fast, and, looking up, he met that laughing gaze, his voice gradually sank to silence.

"Cast him loose, Jake!" said the chief; and his servant obeyed.

Guliermo rose up sullenly, and stood glaring.

"You've an unlucky hand, hombre!" said the other. "This is your third chance, and I'm still alive. When we machos strike, we hit, eh? Have the scars healed on your back?"

"Filibustero de los diables!" yelled the Indian, snatching a heavy brand from the fire. He hurled it with all his force. The other stepped aside, and the log fell against a tree, breaking in a rain of sparks. With a last savage curse upon us all, the mozo dashed into the forest.

We sat down to supper, and I asked point-blank, "You were a filibuster?"

Jake whispered in my ear, "Colonel Hutchins, of the Nicaraguan Rangers!"

I looked with interest at this soldier of fortune, famous in the troubled annals of the country. All believed him to be dead, and the place of his murder had been pointed out to me, in a lonely copse behind Juigalpa. I said as much, and he laughed.

"That was Guliermo's second miss," he answered. "After the massacre of the rangers I escaped, as did P. and S. Jake was ill in Omatepec. Your mozo was then a brilliant aide-de-camp of Guardiola's, and he had a trifling grudge against me. Luckily, an Indian's gratitude is as strong as an Indian's hate; and if one enemy tracked me to kill, another followed to save. Major Gondijo, as he was called then, found me asleep under a tree, and he came mighty near to a successful murder. But the good Samaritan arrived in time."

"What was your quarrel with Guliermo?" I asked, bluntly.

"I was a prisoner of his at El Sauce, and I saved a girl from the brute. That night Muñoz attacked, and drove the Hondurans out of Segovia. In the route I caught Gondijo, tied him up, and gave him fifty lashes. That girl's old father was the good Samaritan I spoke of."

In the jungle one is not free to choose one's comrades, nor is it either safe or practicable to travel alone with baggage. I joined company with Colonel Hutchins, who was on his way to Segovia. After some days he told me his business, and invited me to take part in it. That I could not do, but my warmest sympathies followed this terrible adventurer. Companion more delightful I never met, and nothing will persuade me that the deeds of ferocity attributed to him are other than vile fictions.

It appears that the Indian whose daughter he had

saved did not consider himself quits by nursing his benefactor. He imparted to him the secret of a fortune. "In the wildest district of Segovia," said he, "guided by such and such landmarks, you will find a mine of opals, pure water, not the yellow sort, called Honduran. I know it because my father told me, as his father told him. No white man has ever seen it. There is danger, but I cannot tell you of what sort."

At the time Colonel Hutchins dared not show himself by daylight through the five republics. But he never forgot the old Indian's secret, and, after many wanderings, he had ventured back at length. I may mention a fact not generally known here. Walker's favourite aide is an Englishman, of old family and considerable means. The spirit of adventure led him to the filibuster ranks, as it leads him now, I believe, in the jungles of the Amazon.

After many days of pleasant travel, we parted on the lake shore, with promises of correspondence which were never fulfilled on either side. Some twelve months after, through my agents at San Juan del Norté, I received a curious package. Nothing more strangely beautiful have I ever beheld than the chip of stone enclosed. It was about as large as one's fist, clear as glass, but full of unearthly lights. Broad rays of colour, blue and orange and crimson, shot out of it, as from an enormous diamond—much less brilliant of course, but broader and steadier. I showed it to several jewel-merchants, who had seen small bits like it, but none to compare for size or beauty. This stone was lost in the burning of the Pantechnicon. No word accompanied it, but I had no doubt that Colonel Hutchins was the donor.

The other day, in Regent Street, I came face to face

upon Jake, the small, crabbed Yankee who acted as the filibuster's servant. He hailed me as a friend in the wilderness, and from him I learned those details I am about to set before you. Jake is here on his master's account, and leaves by the next Royal Mail steamer.

After quitting me, the pair journeyed, without incident, to the lonely district pointed out. I am not at liberty to describe it further. There they sought landmarks among the bleak and barren hills of Segovia. After several days' search, they were led to the foot of a rolling slope; miles long it was, sweeping with ridge and furrow half-way to the zenith. The short, fine grass upon it was burnt gray; under that sad tone inequalities of ground all vanished, and the hill seemed to roll in one smooth sweep heavenward. There should have been a tree; but, for leagues about, not a sapling appeared. Nevertheless, the filibusters rode on and up, Jake grumbling and jeering at his master, who laughed. Suddenly, after half-an-hour's travel, he reined up and pointed. Far away to the left, behind a smooth swell of the innumerable hillocks, they saw a gap, and in it a darker shade of leaves.

"That set my blood dancing," says Jake.

They rode thither, and as they went the gap vanished and re-appeared. But at each glimpse it grew wider. After many turns and windings they reached the kloof, as South Africans would call it. Hills swept up boldly on either side, turning suddenly to the right at a hundred yards' distance. All the space between was full of tangled shrubs. Horses could not enter; and it was late. They camped by the old tree which had fallen. Its grey cloak of moss formed a bed around, soaking to decay. They gathered the long beards to lie upon. During the night strange sounds

arose, sighing and moaning of the wind in that narrow cleft.

At dawn they began exploring. A little stream ran through the bush. It was dry, and they used its bed. Going on, the jungle grew thicker. Big trunks of cotton-wood and mahogany crowded to the bank. So tall and so many they rose, the jungle became so dense, that the towering hills were quite lost. Master and servant debated whether to cut a track outwards, and strike the sides of the gap. But they decided to keep on. Presently the stream led through real forest, dusky and shadowed. They walked in twilight, though the sun was high.

On a sudden, Hutchins threw himself back with a cry. On the low bank before him sat a spectre. For the instant even he was startled; then, laughingly, he struck the thing, and it toppled clashing down. A glittering ball pitched between Jake's feet. They sat down to examine it.

The thing was evidently a human skull, encrusted with turquoise, garnets, and gleaming black shale.* The latter substance, in tiny flakes, covered all the forehead and lower jaw. The eye-sockets were defined by a row of garnets, uncut. From ear to ear, widening at the cheek-bones, stretched a band of turquoise, excellent of colour but badly flawed. The lips were marked with garnets, and the wide gaping mouth was filled with them. All the rest of the face had the black, shiny hue of jet. A few ragged teeth remained in the jaw.

It was the eyes of this extraordinary mask which had startled Hutchins. Huge white opals they were, in which a gleaming red spark played devilishly. Jake was half

* Two skulls thus ornamented may be seen in the Christy Collection at Victoria Street. But the eyes have as yet defied all analysis.

frightened, even now, with the ghastly object in his lap.

It had stood upon a skeleton, rudely fashioned of white wood, so old and rotten that the filibuster's blow had almost knocked it into powder. One outstretched arm fell into the stream-bed.

A few feet of clear ground there were where this thing had been set up. After examining all the neighbourhood, the adventurers took their breakfast there, silent and thoughtful. The pipe lit in meditation, says Hutchins at length—according to Jake's report—"'Hev' yer marked arything extror'nary, sergeant, beside that preparation of bones?'

"'I hev, sir!' answers Jake.

"'What mout that be now?' continues the master.

"'I've marked a creek, kurnul, as is a miracle!'

"'A fairish show o' water ran in it last night, eh?'

"'That's so! And now nary drain.'

"'An' what do your exper'ence make o' that?'

"'Maybe there's beavers here; if not, there's human Ind'ans can build a dam.'"

Whilst finishing their pipes, they silently thought the situation over. Such woodsmen do not require to consult before a simple danger like this. Neither seems to have once entertained the idea of returning. Said Hutchins, when they rose: "I guess the land rises towards the other side?"

"I guess so!" answered Jake.

So he slung the skull behind him, and they took machetes in hand to cut through the wood at right angles, away from the stream.

About an hour and a half of steady progress brought

them to the edge. No trace of people or of cultivation did they find. But the hill rose a sheer cliff, as high as they could see for leaves. They followed along cutting. Gradually the hill lowered; but presently Hutchins nearly pitched into a very deep barranca, which ran across the valley and split the cliff. Its straight sides effectually stopped them. Again the pair took a mouthful of Bourbon and lit the reflective pipe.

"There's three ways in this matter," said Hutchins, as Jake reports. "We may track the barranca down, an' that's my idee; or we may strike for the other side, crossing the water agin; or we may risk that mirac'lous stream. It's bound to cross the ditch, I take it."

"I guess so. If it come from these hills, 'twould run like Niagara rapids."

"Ay; but them beavers will have made their dam at the crossing, I should opine. 'Twould be easy to wash a man into that crack."

"That's how it strikes me, kurnul. Let's be walking!"

They followed the barranca. Opals were all forgotten by this time. It had come to a match between these wild fellows and a "drove of Ind'ans," as Jake put it. He watched, rifle in hand, whilst Hutchins cut.

After two hours' heavy toil, straight across the kloof, the ground began to rise again. They had passed the water-shed; the barranca grew perceptibly more shallow. Presently, they struck the channel of the stream, running parallel to it. Hutchins paused. "It's death ahead, Jake!" he muttered: and they turned back, examining each foot of the steep barranca. Nowhere was it practicable. So, at length, they reached the bordering cliff again, from which they had set out. "Up yonder we might see a something!"

said Jake. Where the crevasse parted it, the rock was but twenty to twenty-five feet high ; with a young cotton-tree reared against it they reached the top.

On one hand lay a confusion of hills, one above another, interlacing and winding about. On the other stretched the kloof, probably a mile wide at this point, and full of jungle. Across the barranca trees grew equally thick, but practised eyes could not be mistaken ; clearings or savannah lay beyond a narrow belt of forest. Then the filibusters looked down. Right beneath them, masked from sight of people in the valley, an easy crossing lay, scarcely six feet from the edge of the cliff ; an inch or two of rock gave foothold to reach the path. They hastily descended by their tree ; hanging roots in abundance enabled them to swing round the corner. Triumphant they stood at the head of the crossing.

But much time had been spent in these explorations, and sunset drew on. They resolved to camp on the bare cliff. As well light a fire as not, since the Indians knew their presence. They chose a place somewhat sheltered from the bitter wind that plays at nightfall over those hills. Hutchins took first watch till midnight, and just as he rose to call Jake, a roar of water came down the valley. Jake started, listened, and took share in the silent laugh of his master.

"Them beavers has miscalculated their dam-work!" he chuckled.

"It's Nicaraguan Rangers they mistook!" Hutchins replied. "We've begun fair, Jake. Don't let's spoil the game by losing our scalps."

But the long black night passed quietly. Wailing cries arose, such as they had heard before, and they knew by this

time that the wind did not cause them. But dawn appeared without incident, and the filibusters rose, shivering. They took a mouthful of Bourbon, descended to the dewy brake, and swung round the corner of the cliff.

"Kurnul!" said Jake, as he followed down the path, "I kinder think that if you commanded the rangers still, Henningsen would hev' you broke for want o' strategic science."

"You mean we should have crossed last night?"

"Well, kurnul, this is a made roadway, if ever one there was. It's rough an' it's old, but it's human. If them Ind'ans has broke it down on the fur side, I guess they'll have the larf of us!"

It took them but a quarter of an hour to reach the bottom and climb the other rise. All this time they were hidden under scrub bushes and such soft-wood trees as papaw. Jake's suspicion proved correct. All the path had been cut away ten feet from the top, and they found themselves face to face with a cliff as steep as that on the other side. On either hand the earth sloped down, and, to make all sure, a strong abattis had been built along the crest. It was not needful. The filibusters, aghast, recognised their case as hopeless, and after five minutes' silent contemplation, they turned about.

"We'll try the stream," muttered Hutchins, "provided, Jake, they've not cut off our retreat. Anyhow, it's one to score for the Indians!"

It was two to score. For, on regaining the other end of the causeway, they found the hanging roots all cut. Nothing that walks, save a bird or a mouse, could have passed round the cliff. The filibusters looked, and uttered each a low whistle.

"How's the larder?" asked Hutchins, immediately.

Jake reported charqui for two days' consumption, and said he, "There's living things in this ditch, sure. What devilment d'yer guess there mout be a waitin' for us up at the other end, whar' the crack shallows?"

They started at top speed to see, for the bursting of the dam last night must have injured the fortifications, if, as they supposed, it had flooded the crevasse. Heedless of stinging ants and snakes, they hurried on, slipping on loose stones, falling over roots and bushes. Very soon they found water, stagnant, but flaked with brown foam. It grew deeper and broader as the pair splashed on recklessly. This could be nothing but the overflow of last night. Then, by the increasing height and density of the bush, they knew the barranca was shallowing; the vegetation in it could reach the sun.

Then a wailing clamour rose on either bank, and encouraged the weary men to greater exertions. They did not fear attack in the middle of the barranca; but the flood grew too deep for wading amongst so many obstacles as it concealed. They had to skirt it warily, for there were spots where a strong archer might have struck them. The banks became so low that a stout climb would have taken them out, but it was too probable that the Indians lay in force along its crest. They pressed to the main breach.

It opened on them suddenly, a slope covered with wet mud and rubbish just washed down. The water had but lately ceased flowing. Upon the top a score of naked Indians toiled feverishly at a breastwork. Two or three chiefs in glittering array hurried back and forward, their feather ornaments aglow in the broken sunlight. At sight of the filibusters all stood aghast; then, throwing up their

arms, they fled. A single arrow was shot, which lodged in Jake's holster. He fired over the Indians' heads as they vanished among the trees.

Cautiously Hutchins led the way up. The breastwork had been intended for defence, though it could easily be turned on both sides. But the Indians' hearts failed them. Traces of the flood were more conspicuous on the top. It had poured down from the right with tremendous violence, washing bushes and timber into the crevasse.

"As near a thing, Jake, as either of us has come to," said Hutchins, looking down the slope. "Now, we'll skirmish into the wood, if you've picked the garrapatas from your skin."

"Strategy says, look to yer rear, but you'll never larn strategy, kurnul. S'pose we was to see what's going on by the creek?"

Following the flood's course, they reached the stream, which had almost shrunk to its bed. Such signs were there as showed them that the dam was an old system of defence. Reassured in this direction, the filibusters looked to their arms, and prepared to skirmish on. But in the shadow of the wood an Indian appeared. His head-dress was of dazzling green feathers, with long streamers pendant—tail-plumes of the quetzal bird; a feather collar, scarlet and blue, in neat, delicate patterns, encircled his neck; the ends of his white cummerbund almost swept the earth, and they were superbly adorned with crests of humming-bird. Boldly enough he came out; but his whole body shook with fear or rage. Two boys followed in agony visible—one carrying a bow and arrows, the other a feather bag. Leaning on their rifles, the filibusters waited. At ten yards' distance the Indian stood; he took the bow and

pouch from his attendants, and held them out, with significant signs.

"It's a capitulation in form," said Hutchins, and signalled to open the pouch. This one of the boys did, exhibiting a heap of golden ornaments and some nondescript matters, prized apparently by these savages. Hutchins shook his head and pointed to the opal eyes of the skull which Jake carried behind him. The Indian seemed wild with horror at that sight, but he understood. One of the boys ran back. He was half an hour absent; and, in the meanwhile, Hutchins established quite friendly relations with the chief. Ostentatiously leaving his gun with Jake, he approached with that universal peacemaker —a flask of spirits. At first the Indian refused, then he sipped, and then drank freely. It was Hutchins's conviction that he had tasted fire-water before. Under the friendly feelings thus produced, he exchanged his beautiful collar for a machete or woodknife; but the boy, squatting behind him, whiskyless, could not overcome his horror and affright.

The messenger returned with another bag, exquisitely adorned with feathers. Approaching gingerly, he poured out its contents—a heap of opals. Most of them were clear as glass, like the one Hutchins sent me, but even bigger; some were white as milk, but colourless; others, full of fire, but golden—Honduras opals, in fact. A number, however, might have vied with the grandest gems that come to us from Hungary. The filibusters were dazzled. In the mass shone one big emerald, full of flaws, but three inches square. There was also a great heap of turquoise.

Hutchins gravely put back all the pebbles into the bag, laid his hand upon his heart, and pointed down the valley.

The chief placed his fingers on his lips, to indicate secrecy, and the filibusters did likewise, calling Heaven to witness. They gave the Indian both their machetes, their flask, and a few coins for ornament; then, with deep bowings on either side, departed. The chief followed them at a distance. An hour's walk by the stream brought them to the head of the kloof, where their horses and baggage should have been. They had vanished, but the Indian signalled comfort, and, in a few minutes, the boys appeared round the neighbouring hillock, with the missing animals and all their traps. Evidently there was an easier exit from the Indian territory, by which these boys had passed.

Hutchins selected what things he could best spare, and gave them to the chief, who withdrew to a distance, and the filibusters mounted. Loyally they rode away, and no human being has heard that adventure, until Jake told it me the other evening. Don't be in haste to pronounce it impossible. The waste lands of Central America contain hundreds of such Indian communities, not to be approached by white men. Many of them have a quaint civilisation. In Costa Rica I may name the Talamancas and Pranzos; in Nicaragua the Woolwas, Ramas, and Guatusos; in San Salvador the Indians of the Balsam Coast; in Guatemala, the Lacandones, the Petens, and a score of others—above all, the famous people of the Itzimaya.

THE VOICE OF THE CHARMER.

A STRANGE STORY.—CHAPTER XXIX. : "The song by which the serpent-charmer charms the serpent—sweet, so sweet—the very birds on the boughs hushed their carol as if to listen."

THIS passage fell under my eye the other day in Lord Lytton's famous romance. It set me thinking. The song of the snake-charmer wherewith Margrave performs or accompanies his necromancy is represented as a very old one—composed, perhaps, by the grand Chaldeans, whoever they may have been. Lord Lytton's magician might well have possessed, among his other advantages over mere humanity, a power of reducing Oriental songs to the Occidental scale—that is, to civilised comprehension. I am well aware, through experience, that he who can perform this difficult feat may produce results surprising. In my time I have enjoyed a cruise along the Bornean coast with the late Captain Micheson, commanding Rajah Brooke's gunboat *Royalist*, who was thus gifted. He would listen with delight to an air his Lascar crew was nosing and yelling on the fo'k's'le, and afterwards, by transposing it to our English scale, would make of it something very sweet for the quarter-deck. But, after all, we had to take a great deal on trust ; neither could I trace

in the fo'k's'le din that air heard afterwards on the concertina, nor did the Lascars, to all seeming, recognise their nasal melody in the quarter-deck performance. It is nowhere stated that Margrave was a finished musician, and no reason is given us for supposing that his grand Chaldeans used a scale different from that now admired by their descendants.

What, then, is the music employed by snake-charmers in this day? My own experience is wide, truly; but until reading that passage yesterday I had not thought upon the subject. Everyone has seen that exhibition under the acacia trees of the Ez Bekieh. At its best day the music of your Arab charmer was all contained in six toy-bells and a tum-tum. The sudden and alarming burst of civilisation wherewith we have benefited poor, beautiful, old Grand Cairo, has enlarged the *répertoire*, no doubt. An Arab, in this day, shows off his snakes to the Guards' Waltz or the Conspirators' Chorus. But serpent-charming of the true sort—that which strikes one as something supernatural—has its home farther east.

Through Hindostan, however, you will find snake-charmers, who are vastly useful. In Singapore, also, during my time, ladies did not pleasantly hear the merits of their pet magician disputed. He kept the house clear of snakes, and they, after all, are no joke in the Far East. It is very well to sit and laugh at Mounseer This or That, in a comfortable stall, whilst he brings canaries out of your bonnet, or rabbits from your hat. But the cases are somewhat different. It may be conjuring, it may be humbug, if you please; but those who actually see a fine cobra extracted from a hole in the wainscot of their drawing-room are not in a casuistical frame of mind. They have too much

interest staked. The reptile may have been hidden there by a confederate, but, on the other hand, it may not; and the mere possibility of a cobra in one's *salon* disarms the steady judgment.

I do not feel that superstitious and unreasoning horror of a snake which is constitutional with many. Under certain due precautions, I can watch these creatures with great interest and admiration. For that reason, perhaps, I have been able to observe snake-charmers more critically than some who have written on the subject. It is not in the province I have marked for myself to discuss such matters at length or in detail. One observation only I wish to make. In the Far East—of Hindostan I do not speak—residents often keep a boa or a wild mongoose to catch the rats. You may hear him all night, rustling and springing on the *atap* roof overhead. When the boa grows too big, or exhausts the supply of rats, he vanishes in peace, and the resident buys another. Now it must be observed that the charmer doesn't entice this domestic serpent—doesn't touch him in any way. He will catch you young boas in the compound, or any other sort of snake, but not the one which you *know* to be inhabiting your bungalow. At least, that is my experience gained on two occasions, and it may go for what it's worth.

But the question before us is of music. I saw a man who dealt with snakes, only once in Borneo, when stopping with Tuah Bully, at Sibuyong. We had gone out netting deer, a state ceremonial, like the review in Europe held to entertain a royal visitor. For Mr. Johnson Brooke, the Tuan Mudah, had come to our village. Going to that celebration, I happed on a small clearing of the forest, not wide enough to open out the sky. There I discovered an

ancient man, with a face very like a sheep's, squatted betwixt two woven *tamboks* full of rubbish. He was presented to me as the *manang*, or medicine man of the village, come out to offer his services in case of accident from boar or deer. I enjoyed a good deal of conversation with this old fellow. He had some fine snake skins, or fragments of them, in his *tamboks*; and amongst other questions, I asked what he did when summoned to a case of snake-bite. For answer, the old man took a tum-tum from one of the Malays gathered round, for we had several men of the Tuan Mudah's suite with us. Upon this implement he beat a *rappel*, exactly like that one hears every sundown over the water in Malay countries. After drumming for a few moments, the sheep-like magician struck up such a drone as would stir jealousy in a hive of humble-bees. The by-standers listened in awe and ecstasy. After droning in one breath till human lungs could no longer hold out, he screamed like a night-owl, then hummed again, and then screamed and hummed at once, as it were. The only sign of rhythm I recollect, was a sort of recurring hiss, addressed probably to the snakes. Oriental music always makes me laugh, and laugh I did with glee intense; but the more I shouted the more that old man sang, until Bully's son came up, and we went on.

Snake-charming proper I never saw or heard of in Borneo. The skill of this magician was invoked only after an accident. Though reptiles are as numerous and as malignant there as in any land I've travelled, very, very seldom do they hurt a human being. It is not the jungle snake which should be feared, but the wretch familiar to man, which haunts your house or your garden. The houses of Borneo are raised on high posts, and the children

play, the women pursue their domestic duties, thirty feet or so above a reptile's reach ; hence there is no room or occasion for the charmer's art. When, by rare chance, somebody gets bitten, the ordinary practitioner of the village is called in, and he makes the noise I have described ; but whether he does anything else I cannot say.

A case of snake-charming I saw at Esne, on the Nile—the only curious one, indeed, which dwells particularly in my recollection at this moment. I was fresh from Oxford when I first made that pleasant trip along the storied river. In our ingenuous fancy dwelt a score of charming myths unquestioned. We credited the beauty of Arab women, the sombre pride of Arab men, and we looked for adventures hourly. None arrived except of our own studious devising. Under such mistaken apprehensions it was long ere we began to note the fascination of our voyage. When a man has once rebuked and sternly cast aside his British restlessness, has stamped it on his very soul that there exists no need to be "up," no merit in "doing," the calm of the Nirwan settles on him. It rises from the feet upwards, and when the heart is reached, his head falls gently back, his limbs distend, his eyes close languidly. How has he bustled after vain things all these long years past ! Flat now upon the cabin's top he dreams through the stilly day. The steersman's sudden call, the droning hail of boats that pass, and the gurgling of the river softly chorus the melody that lulls him. He watches the green shore slide past, its endless sheets of corn unwind, its glimmering groves of date, and water-wheels revolving slowly. He sees the naked fellahs bent to the earth, their black shoulders lustrous in the sun. On each gentle rise stands a village, buried in palm-trees. Here

and there a white-walled town, with minarets and little domes picked cleanly out against the eternal blue. Further still he sees the bare and wind-worn mountains, prismatically coloured at morn and evening. And thus, content to behold things from a charmed distance, unanxious to explore, heedless of adventure, he finds existence a sweet dream of peace. Beauty lies round, all his for enjoyment; but the glamour flies off at his first step ashore.

Amongst other illusions we reposed a fantastic belief in the Egyptian dancing-girl. Some travellers encourage one to expect a marvel of grace and fascination, and if others dilute this report we thought the latter must be inappreciative souls. Is it not a fact of history that the Grand Pasha banished the whole profession, alarmed at their growing influence—sent them to Esne, six hundred miles from his capital, whither the nobles were forbidden to follow? Here is proof positive, we argued; and when sadly convinced that the loveliness of such Arab maidens as are visible bears no more relation to M. Gerôme's portraits than a coster's pony does to a thoroughbred—even yet we preserved undimmed our enthusiastic hopes of the Ghawazee. And so the blessed calm into which we were settling rather broke up at sight of Esne.

It doesn't matter how many years have passed since our boat moored off the dwelling-place of the banished Almeh. I remember it better than a thousand great historic sites which have come before my wandering eye. I remember that low hovel by the water's-edge, where an ancient, one-eyed Arab kept a sort of registry for the dancing women. There you engaged a troop. In my time some formal questions were put in the interests of morality. But the real purport of the office was to levy a tax upon each

performance of the ballet. Presently it was noised about the settlement how a strange dabëah had arrived, and the *coryphées* came to look. Very well do I remember the quaint gathering of the damsels. From a score of low huts they hastened, with such speed as professional etiquette allows—speed enough to belly out the loose silk mantles, hanging from neck to heel, the scarves diaphanous, and the wide muslin trousers, all of brightest colour. They looked like a swarm of butterflies approaching. Formed round us in a half-circle, they leisurely and silently surveyed their patrons, making cigarettes the while.

Another disillusion! The too fascinating Almehs of Mehemet's day have degenerated wofully. In truth these never accepted banishment. Enormously rich, holding a place in Cairo like that of the Hetairai among the Greeks, all who could be really dangerous had in hand a stock of eligible offers. Forthwith they accepted one of these, and vanished from sight. Some of the exiled girls, cut off from their old free life, swayed the politics of Egypt through stately Pashas. Such alone as were too ugly or too unskilful in Dalilah arts to be dangerous, went into banishment. The public instantly marked its comprehension of the change. The old word Almeh dropped from use, and Ghawazee was employed to describe the new class of dancing women. Since the edict—which was issued, I fancy, in 1839—the sisterhood has been mostly dependent on cheap slave children for recruits. It is no simple profession, that of the Ghawazee. She begins to practise as soon as she can walk, and if that loosening of the joints be not needed which our ballet-masters technically describe as "turning," there is, on the other hand, a vastly difficult preparation. A child must learn to use every muscle separately, as it were, to quiver from head to foot

without moving a limb, to thrill tremulously from the waist upwards, whilst the hips rest still as marble; and a score of such unnatural tricks.

Deeply disgusted to find such ugliness where an ideal grace had been expected, we commanded a performance for mid-day, resolving to depart in the afternoon. Asked if we would wish to see any of the *coryphées* around, we disdained to choose. There were black women and brown, but the most part had that sickly yellow tint which one rarely sees outside the class of Ghawazee. It comes, they say, of gipsy blood, and is prized; for the real Almeh was a gipsy, or was supposed to be. One-eyed women abounded, two in three were gashed with smallpox, and all had their faces so plastered as to look positively gruesome in the clear, fresh light of morning. Not a single one who boasted a pretence of comeliness, and few even who were young. Such is a plain and truthful report of the Ghawazee at my day.

Their performance came off, which I am not going to describe, for it will be found in many chronicles. None which I have read are exactly fair, for some unduly praise it, some unduly reprove it, and the major part ignorantly declare there's nothing in it. The dance of the Ghawazee, to be accurately treated, must be considered ethnically, historically, ethically, and philosophically. As the humour gossipy is on me just now, I do not feel equal to an honest disquisition on the subject, and I let it alone.

We were so far interested, though bored, by the dance as to resolve on seeing it again when we returned. But, in the meanwhile, sights, unrivalled elsewhere, awaited us up the river. The wind dropped, however, and we could not get away. On the dragoman our wrath fell, as hour by hour slipped idly past, and nothing he suggested to amuse

us except another nautch. The blessed calm of which I spoke just now is nourished and sustained by motion. To sit aloft beside the nectar, "girdled with the gleaming world," and to watch men toil beneath, was the ideal of a god-like life to the subtlest-feeling race of poets. No philosopher, but a fool, could sit and eye that dreary hamlet, visibly settling and crackling in the sun, distinguished from all other hamlets up and down stream only by the flitting of those wide-winged butterflies, as they gossipped from hut to hut. I don't know that the vials of our wit were ever filled more carefully, or emptied with more bitterness on Achmet's head. Writhing to his inmost depths, the dragoman exclaimed at length—"There's a snake-charmer here!" Scornfully we agreed to see him, but the jealous Registrar declined to aid us, and the Ghawazee assembling uttered contumelious remarks. But in an hour's time our sailors found the magician, and escorted his party to the boat—for nobody would lend us a "hall" for the performance. Whoever rail or jeer, the people of Esne believe in their *artistes*, and resent a slight of their fascinations.

The party numbered three: an old Hindoo, a one-eyed Arab, and a girl. How the Tamby and his grand-daughter had wandered to this strange place, I never knew, or I have forgotten. She was a pretty child, of that age—I do not know how to measure it by years—when the dusky daughters of Ind have already a shy look of womanhood, whilst their limbs are still unset. We understood the jealousy of those hideous dancers. The little Hindoo girl passed through their ranks like a bright-eyed Peri.

No one is more satisfied than I that beauty dwells with the fair. Our English babies are a proverb among all

peoples. But everybody knows by experience that there is a moment when clearness of complexion fades, when eyes grow dim and silly, features swell and distort themselves. That moment we describe in male kind as the period of "hobbledehoy;" for girls we have also an expression, less graphic, and not more poetical—"bread-and-buttery." Why is it that no change of the sort is noticed amongst children of dark skin? Some reasons I could suggest, but they are no more than my own imagining. Of the fact there can be little doubt, I think. Your Oriental passes at a step from childhood to womanhood, bright or plain, as the case may be. Very seldom do you observe the pretty girl-child who had hung about your bungalow change into an ugly creature; very seldom does the ugly child grow beautiful. The "bread-and-buttery" period is scarcely ever to be recognised in the tropics. It may be declared, upon the other side, that girls like this snake-charmer—pretty, and soft, and bright-eyed—are very common, whilst lovely women are rare. Nothing, however, is lost or changed with them: they show only an expansion of the childish charms, and it may be our fault that we do not admire on a large scale the grace and beauty which pleased us so much in miniature.

The one-eyed Arab seated himself, and preluded on an instrument which I might, perhaps, be allowed to call an incredible guitar. It was truly a machine adapted for raising snakes, and the one-eyed Arab knew its every tone of horror. "Sweet, so sweet," recollect, "the very birds," &c. Things strike different people differently. The birds may have paused—I would not hastily deny it. We ourselves, men and Englishmen, bounded on our seats. That the timid dove, the curious pigeon, the jerky hoopoo, and

the green tayr-Allah—which is always so undecided in its views—may express a like sentiment by pausing, seems possible. If they had pitched themselves headlong into Nilus, I should not have been surprised. Awful was the sound. The one-eyed Arab flushed it first in the treble of his guitar, chevied it with leaps and bounds, overran it, turned back, screamed curses at it, bounded and jumped at it, until it was fast caught in the hollow cocoa-nut at the bottom of his instrument. Then the imprisoned melody banged itself in a manner to stir pity, whilst the huntsman started fresh game, and pursued it. Meanwhile was produced a basket, and from the basket—first, an asp; second, a serastris, that horned demon; third, a yellow snake, whose horrid name I know not. We, at the head of the companion, watched these preparations, one foot on sea and one on shore, as I might phrase it. Our crew stood on the deck below, and watched with white eyes.

The girl had stationed herself on the other side the poop. She was not a bit frightened. The reptiles seemed to know her, and smoothly sleeked their necks upon the floor, within striking distance of her little naked feet. The old charmer put his basket aside, slued to the front a tum-tum hanging at his back, and straightway began. The Arab paused a moment, as if to catch the air or the time—music in all climes and styles is the pet science of humbug! Then they went off together, awfully. The snakes raised their heads, swayed as if listening, then balanced themselves with a dancing motion. Forthwith the girl threw off her long-sleeved mantle, and appeared in garb of the sisterhood—corset of silk, with a modest *fichu*, spangled girdle of many folds, and thick muslin trousers. From her head a long veil depended, kept in place by a pretty cap, sewn over with gold coins.

The snakes seemed to be awaiting her. As she spun round on one little foot, the other lightly quivering over the boards, they followed the movement with heads revolving. As she threw up her arms, tinkling the small brazen castanets between finger and thumb, they rose on their tails and hissed in horrid unison. Down again, round and about, they seemed to imitate each graceful movement of the child, quivering when she stood still and shook, swaying towards her as she lowered her slender arms and rounded them delicately—following, in short, the action of the dance. It was a performance to impress one's memory. On one side the deck this small and slender girl, moving in graceful undulations; opposite, the bowing snakes, writhing, tremulous, their glassy eyes fixed on her, and their black tongues shooting.

But, as to the music! There are not words existing to describe the extremes of human wickedness. Something I have written on the score. I could add a page or two of reiteration. But, for the present purpose, it may suffice to say that there was no resemblance whatsoever between the music of these people and that of Lord Lytton's imaginary magician. Is there anywhere, or has there been at any time, a special chant used in snake-charming? And, if so, has any European of sound hearing found it tolerable?

MEERCATS.

A PROVERB is current in South Mexico which cautions the prudent man against noticing his friend's pets; for if he win their hearts the master will be jealous, and if he show dislike of them they will bite. This is proverbial philosophy of that wiser sort which deals with the dark side of things, and it contains probably more truth than our English and kindly saw, "Love me, love my dog." But I, at least, could never be jealous of my pets, nor of the friend who loved them; and since I am so lucky, so happy, as to possess a pair of creatures very uncommon, if not unique, in England (1874), I shall try to earn the reader's interest in them without scruple. They are meercats, to give them their own name; siricat (*Cynictis Levaillantri*), the books call them.

Before launching into enthusiasm on my own specimens, it may be well to describe their wild brethren at home in South Africa.

The meercat, as we are told, never crosses the Orange River. I am not prepared to dispute this local faith, but I feel a strong suspicion that it ranges much farther south. Doubtless, however, the table lands beyond the Orange are its favourite *locale*. In that country, mountain ranges, low

and flat-topped, divide great plains of sand, bearing but a scanty crop of herbage. So thin is the vegetation that the sand shows through it, giving the landscape an uniform tone of grey. "Veldt" these lands are called. At certain times of year they break into liveliest colours; heaths, white, pink, and red; camomiles, yellow; and bulbous plants of a dozen hues make the veldt one wide garden. In sheets of colour it lies stretched out for miles, to a dim horizon, zone beyond zone. But the flowers soon fade, the rains dry up, the merciless sun of Africa holds sway. Of that spring garden, brown stalks and withered tassels only remain, sole evidence of its brief glory. Over such sad wastes feed herds of game, migratory for the most part. When the water of one district is exhausted they go to another.

Of all the veldt animals, and they are many, marmots and meercats only have a fixed abode, and they seem independent of water. The careless science of the boers has classed several species of animal—three at least—under a common name. This confusion is justified to some extent by an apparent identity of habits. All meercats live in holes, excavated to an astonishing depth in the tufaceous lime which does duty for soil out yonder. In a day's ride you will see hundreds of the pretty creatures scurrying from the path with tails upraised. They never wander far from home, and speedily they reach the burrow's mouth, where, sitting on their haunches, they wait to see what your intentions are, curiously pointing their heads to a right angle with your course, but watching you through eyes the brightest, blackest possible. At the first motion suspicious, down goes the little head, up the little heels, and meercat is safe twenty feet underground before you can dismount.

These animals are all gregarious, and the three species I identified appear to live peaceably together. Two of them are weasels, one larger than the other; the third a squirrel. They so much resemble each other to a careless eye, it is not surprising that one species only should be admitted by the boers. All are grey in colour, all have black noses, and all sit up like kangaroos in the entrance of their holes, which lie side by side. Even the tail shows little difference as the creature gallops home, clearing the scant, low brush. But on the Campbell grounds, where I was lost for two days, I saw a kind conspicuously distinct, of larger size than those across the Vaal River; it has fur of a chestnut hue. Some wandering Griquas reported it to me as ferocious if molested. Those who have read the story of my adventures in South Africa may recollect that I captured a young siricat, and brought it to England. Poor little Diamond! she fell a victim to lung disease at the first breath of English autumn. Not I alone, but a large circle of friends, grieved for that quaint and pretty little creature. I solicited every friend I possessed at the Cape to send me one of the same species; and in May of this year, just after I returned from the Gold Coast, my prayer was granted by a lady not personally known to me. It is very difficult, even in their own country, to get one of these animals, for the most of them are so savage as to fret to death in captivity, and they are always delicate. A little note, which accompanied the gift, showed in each line what a sacrifice it was, the parting with these "dear little meercats." New velvet collars had been made for them the very last day, as I was informed. Chains just suited to their strength would be found in the cage; the character of the male was thus; and so on, through a score of proofs

how highly they had been prized. With what delight I visited the docks that sunny May morning, to receive myself the treasure! What anxiety to know if it was safe! And what joy to see two little black noses restlessly poking through the bars, eyes—supplicating release—bright as the jewels of their native sand, and small clawed hands thrust out in mere impatience of captivity. To the glee of Poplar and the delight of Limehouse I conveyed my present through the streets, safely reached home, and opened the cage door; in return for which kindness the male bit me through the hand as soon as he was tired of play. With this announcement of their family and position, I may present my young friends to your notice.

Perhaps you think you know a siricat by sight, remembering the specimen formerly in Regent's Park. Let me tell you that my beauties are not better to be judged by that comparison than is the Venus of Milo to be measured by the proportions of a fish-wife. Come on the table, my pets, and let me describe you. That your brother in the Gardens?—that smooth-haired, thin-tailed ferret, with brown eyes, grey nose, and laziness in his very bones? a cousin he may be indeed, for I think you have many relatives little known, but brother is he none. Open your jet black eyes for a testimony against him, and display the long silk lashes envied by all young ladies of your acquaintance. Give me your ears of black velvet to scratch—ears, for your cousin's jealousy, beyond his matching. But I'll dispense with such proof of character as lies in leapfrog and general tumult, for I would have you still, my cats, whilst I inventory your beauties.

Item: a black nose, fined to the utmost sharpness, swelling suddenly into grey cheeks after the vulpine mould

Item: curious tufts, almost white, at corners of the eye; eyebrows light, but orbits of the eye jet-black; lashes thick and curled, giving softness to an eye round, black, extraordinarily bright; a brindled coat, banded so curiously with brownish-grey upon a light grey ground as to give the effect of silk when observed in shadow, though the fur is rough and "broken." The length of my male, Snap, is about eight inches, or nine at the most, excluding his tail; the female, Diamond, is an inch shorter may be. The tail of each, tapering to a point, is as long as all the body; in Snap's case—he, by-the-bye, is much darker than his mate—the root of the tail is near two inches in thickness. Diamond has it thinner all through; in both cases it is tipped with black.

The pair differ notably in expression. Snap, whose face is the more beautiful, has a look elaborately kind; you can watch him "making it up" when he sees a stranger. He squeezes to his cage bars, offering his round head to scratch like a parrot; or, if loose, he croodles to your feet, upturning his eyes with such looks of innocence as might make a dove feel guilty. As plain as words he asks to be petted; but touch him at your peril! All the art of treachery and guile lies in his pretty head, and is readable in his eyes after a little experience. Him I rarely dare let loose. Very different is Diamond, both of appearance and habit. That lady, I take it, has a melancholy history. She seems in her grief to have sought solace of philosophy; not in vain. Her grave eyes show the science of the stoics, her nose is long and wise enough for him who summed all wisdom in a caution against beans, her appetite is modelled on the precepts of Epicurus, and she, with her husband, is devoted to the practice of the Peripatetics.

Gravity is Di's prevailing characteristic. She objects not to a game of romps at seasons fitting—seasons unfitting in her opinion she announces by a snarl, at sound of which Snap drops upon his stomach and begs abject pardon. But Diamond finds more pleasure than play affords in clinging, hours through, along my chest, cooing so soft, so sweet, it brings delicious melancholy to hear. Great and speech-like is the meercat's range of tones. Come to me now, Di; cling whilst I write, and talk to me in your own pretty language. There! That is the little song of contentment, to the burden of which I will write of your trick with the eyelid—well worth noting. These meercats have the third or transverse lid strongly developed. As Di sits on my shoulder she ceaselessly works it, passing the cover across her bright eyes, squinting horribly to meet it. She can close the orb as completely as can a bird, though the upper and under lid be stretched wide. Di's face is not so pretty as her mate's—it is longer and lighter in tone—but satin is not more smooth than her head.

Hark! she is telling me something. The soft little coo is changed to a longer note—Cook-cook-oo, aroo. I know what it means without looking up. Someone has come to the window opposite, and Di is calling my attention to this impertinence. Should a second person appear, she will inform me of the alarming fact by an excited trill, Chook-arook-aroo! Di is alive indeed when a dog barks in the street. The soft tones all leave her voice. Like a flash she jumps down, and runs to and fro, angrily chuckling, in search of the enemy. This furious hatred of dogs is characteristic of the meercat, and greatly does it disadvantage them. Though trained from the youngest age, they never quite overcome the instinctive passion. My

first Diamond grew to bear the presence of a toy terrier, but she constantly bit him without the least provocation. The little creatures of which I write grow fairly mad when they catch sight of him, bounding with screams of rage upon their foe, seizing him, and holding on with the obstinate ferocity of bulldogs. They will bear to be swung round, dog and all, by the tail, rather than leave their grip. A bucket of water is the only resource in these difficulties. Painful scenes have taken place, and, indeed, the frantic hatred of the meercats for my pet dog is the one trouble they give me. Mr. Wayland, of Albania, Cape Colony, told me he had a powerful mastiff strangled by two of these small fiends—for fiends of passion they are under the irritation of a dog's presence. They will even tear and scratch madly at a blanket he has lain on.

Every day Di explores my room, examining each corner, scratching out each grain of dust in every crevice, extracting tacks, pulling up the carpet with zeal worthy a better cause. When a gleam of sunlight enters anywhere, she will find it and bask therein, standing on tiptoe or sitting on her haunches, fore paws pendant, cooing ceaselessly. Should there be proceedings about the room in which she feels interest, she will slue the upper part of her body round without dropping to earth, audibly expressing her opinion of our doings. In her voyages of discovery Di rarely fails to strike an unknown shore, into which she scratches with delight. Most musical is her cry on such occasions, telling of curiosity and interest intense, quite another note from the threatening twitter she will sound if taken up whilst thus busy—a twitter which the wise man heeds by letting her fall immediately. Di can bark too, a

sharp, shrill cry, which we commonly hear when meat is shown her; and she has at command the most savage of snarls, whereof her mate gets the benefit.

The activity and spirit of these animals are conspicuous. They never rest, unless warming themselves in sun heat or fire. The attitude then assumed is characteristic, and so droll that the gravest of my acquaintance cannot choose but laugh. The meercat is able to sit upright apparently for an indefinite time. Even standing on the tips of his toes does not seem to fatigue; I have seen Di so stand for twenty minutes, moving her head at every sound, chattering all the while. But I should take it that this attitude is practised for the purpose of overlooking the thin veldt herbage. It is generally assumed, I notice, under sudden alarm or curiosity. The meercat I caught when too young to have learned mere habits, never stood on its toes, but sat only—hard to say which is the quainter position. In sitting the cat rests upon its haunches, bows its back comfortably, hangs its fore paws helplessly in front, and amicably chuckles to you over its shoulder. This is a manner of resting evidently adapted well for vigilance in plains so open and so full of enemies. The sleeping posture is curious exceedingly; your meercat sleeps standing, with its head between its hind feet and fore paws folded—I mean that the top of the head actually rests upon the floor. It is only at night that the male shows any kindness to his companion; I am bound in fairness to admit that she invites none. When Di has thus curled herself over into a ball, Snap stretches his body as far over her as it will reach, and so they slumber till morning. They are not easily disturbed at

night, differing in that respect from my mongoose, who sleeps beside them. The depth and security of their native burrows would account for this.

A meercat is omnivorous. Flesh, fish, fruit, insects, vegetables, cooked or raw, hot or cold, all are devoured with an avidity which, on the female's part, approaches fury. Snap must not feed till she has done. Though almost independent of water at home—or so, at least, it would appear, for the dew must often suffice—they take a great quantity when caged. This is not unusual in my experience.

To those who find the charm of a pet in studying peculiarities, instincts, and mysteries of nature, the siricat will be found full of interest. An ordinary dog is understood with ease—no sneer at the frankness of his noble nature. Other small creatures have not, in general, much character to study. But your siricat is an animal brimming with intelligence, full of puzzles to be solved. I know there is a way to subdue Snap's treacherous ferocity, to change Di's gentleness into an active love. None who saw it can forget the plaintive affection of my first Diamond when it was ill—the way it tottered after me about the room—the sweet, low moan of misery and love with which it nestled to my breast in agony. Then it is one feels the pain, when the creature one had thought a quaint and pretty plaything, too volatile for deep care, shows one its loving heart, and dies.

CHANGHI.

THE other night, taking up Wraxall's "Life in the Sea," the book opens at p. 132, where is found an account of harpooning rays. In reading it a picture shapes itself on the retina of my memory. I see a muddy pool, bounded by slopes of mud, on which the slime of the tide departed shines phosphorescent. Small mud-fish, leaping like grasshoppers, make a tinkle and splash everlasting in the ooze. Crowning the slopes, a skeleton array of mangrove roots, arches and arcades, arms, ribs, and nobs, reeking with slime that moves, a-boil with filthy life. Great crabs flop and flounder in and out amongst the oyster-laden sticks, with slow stretching of arms and wary swaying of antennæ. The dirty labyrinth, still dim and steaming with miasma, reaches as far as eye can see. A paddy-bird stalks on the verge, meditating, snow-white against that dingy background. The pale green canopy above, suspended on brown hoops and stilts, encroaches not a leaf upon the vista. To one surveying this sight from the seaward, the foliage appears to be trimmed underneath, like that in a royal park. Early sun-rays strike it almost horizontally, throwing a golden light upon the topmost boughs, darkening the dusky shade beneath. A crowd of men

splash in the pool, screaming, laughing, up to the waist in puddle.

Where was it I saw this? A moment's search amongst memories that throng, a steadier gaze at tree and sky and man; the spot is identified as Changhi, on the island of Singapore. I had not thought of the place, or of my sojourn there, for years; and yet, of all pleasant holidays stored in my mind, the days spent at Changhi—I guarantee no spelling—were amongst the most delightsome. Let me see! It was in June, 1863, that my brother and I hired Mr. Reid's bungalow for a month's picnic. Changhi lies almost opposite to Singapore, on the other side the island, which is only ten miles across. What golden days were passed in that retreat! We left the city in a small yacht belonging to Messrs. C. and B., well-known merchants of that time, but no longer famous. After eleven years I suppose a man may plead lapse of time in excuse for violation of the Foreign Enlistment Act. Our kind hosts were certainly breaking the law on the occasion referred to, and we might be called accessories. Few firms in Singapore, however, could throw the stone at them with a clear conscience;—observe that I speak of the city as I knew it, eleven years ago.

At this present time of writing one may specially rejoice that the insurrection failed. I am pleased to read in my *Times* that the "Rajah of Johore remains friendly," whilst Perak is murderous, Larut suspected, and the Malay peninsula in general tumult. There is, indeed, no Rajah at Johore, and the Sultan doesn't count. He is a *roi fainéant*, with a Tumangong as his *maire du palais*. To this gentleman the despatch refers, as did our attempt at

rebellion. But my brother and I were quite innocent of ill designs against his authority. Not till morning dawned over the lovely straits did we remark—for we had gone aboard at midnight—that the schooner carried an undue complement of men, and that many passengers were there besides ourselves. Gorgeously dressed beings they, for the most part, resplendent in silks, and cloth of gold, and turbans of Persian cloth. The sharpness of the look-out raised suspicions also. At our first question the captain told us, with much laughter, that these fellow-passengers had war and rebellion in hand. "That determined-looking chap by the wheel," he said, "is brother to the Sultan of Johore, and means to win him his rights. He's steering our course, for the Tumangong knows what we are about; his gun-boats are looking for us."

They looked for us with such diligence that the filibustering craft had a voyage more roundabout than that of any vessel since the ark. She could outsail a native craft, and the Tumangong's officers were naturally loath to fire on the English flag. But they laid traps for her, and again and again had she to fly for life from some sheltered creek where she had hoped to land her passengers. They were got rid of at length, with all their cargo of arms, and straightway they raised a desperate war against the Tumangong, in name of their imprisoned Sultan. But we shared none of these adventures. Off Changhi, at dawn of the next day, Arthur and I bade the rebellious craft farewell, and skimmed the bright waves merrily towards land. I remember that the mats of our hired sampan were profusely stained with betel juice, and a guilty conscience made me wonder lazily whether this might be blood

of enemies slain by the unscrupulous Tumangong. But our boat's crew were honest and cheery, as are most of those people, much calumniated, the Malays.

The month we passed at Changhi was a round of pleasure. Before dawn we were up, and the first sun rays fretting the restless sea always found us abroad. It was our habit to coast along, exploring each break in the line of mangroves. I have heard it said, and said by persons whose testimony I respect, that game is not found in these swamps. Such is not my experience, but I admit it limited in this respect. However the case stands elsewhere, it is certain that animals of many kinds will be pointed out occasionally by your quick-eyed Malays in the mangroves near Changhi, and birds abound. The quadrupeds, of course, are all of arboreal species, tiger cats, squirrels, and such. Monkeys are particularly numerous, and their clashing flight through the tree-tops is heard when they are not seen. It was in a mangrove swamp of Borneo, unless I mistake, that my brother shot two specimens of the proboscis monkey, out of the only school we met with.

From dawn till the heat began, paddling in the creeks was our amusement. The day we passed in skinning and preparing specimens secured, and at evening we went to fish coral. Nowhere in my wanderings have I seen such beds of it. The coral lies like a garden of loveliest flowers all along this coast. Our boatmen preferred to fish at evening time, because the water is warmed then, and more pleasant to dive in. At all times it has such clearness as I have not anywhere seen equalled, excepting once off the Isle of Skye, when, perhaps, I was particularly fortunate. The coral is of every colour save blue. Red, green, and yellow of all possible tints tesselate the sea-bottom in an

immense mosaic, but white predominates. Sponges, hard to distinguish by sight, supply the only colour wanting—blue. There is one sponge I particularly recollect, which grows like a bunch of purple fingers outspread, in gaps between one growth of coral and another. The red we only found attached to rocks, from which it is not easily broken. No sand at all can be seen, and little weed—nothing but colour and the wonderful insect-growths, bush-like, or in grooved nodules, or in cups so gracefully voluted as to defy the rivalry of art. These latter one could find of every size, always snow-white, from the great punch-bowl three feet in diameter, to the flower-like goblet with petals overlapping. In these cups, fish, small of size, play all day through—fish that seem cut in emerald, or brilliant with enamel work, or shot with all colour, like humming-birds. At ten feet depth we could watch their pretty play as clearly as in a brook. In and out amongst the long branches, which one can scarce believe are solid, from lip to lip of the big white bowls, chasing each other they dart. Rather jewels than fish they seem under the broken ripple of the water. Nor in the deeps alone is this garden to be admired. It reaches from high-water mark, and lovely specimens we have picked dryshod. But what no science can preserve is the lovely marking of the coral made by sea-slime and weed. Each volute and hollow on the white surface is picked out in a lively green, delicate as fairy pencilling. I don't understand coral. Perhaps of all those flowers and cups and bushes we so delighted to admire, not one but the collector or the tradesman would cast aside as worthless. If it be so, I render thanks where all thanks are due, that such beauty has been indeed made common.

It was often, in the course of morning excursions, that

we came across the scene sketched in beginning this paper. Whilst my pen is at work, memory stirs within me. The picture forms more distinct. I see fat Chinamen brandishing their spears, screaming and laughing. Livid are their naked shoulders, dead yellow-pink, as is the complexion of the race. Their tails are twisted up like a coronet on shaven crowns. Stark they are not—who ever saw a Chinaman stripped? Blue "bags" just show an edge dripping above the muddy surface. They plunge spears recklessly amongst each others' feet, shouting the while. Each instant a skate, or ray, or nondescript sea denizen flops up transfixed, and is cast into the sampan lying by. Nothing they care whether water be warm or cold; your Chinaman works independent of the seasons. We stay on our paddles and watch, rudely laughed at by these fellows, who feel a like contempt, equally stupid and unthinking, for lazy wastrel of Malay and English world-conqueror. They shout their jokes to one another, and laugh full-mouthed, and stare for an instant to laugh again, and again resume their work—a mannerless, boisterous, hard-labouring crew. Our Malay boatmen glower at them, and splash the nearest with their paddles; but nothing heeds the Chinaman, good-natured for mere brutal scorn.

These fishers make a fair business of it—not so steady, nor so easy, as that secured by the Malay fashion, but recommended to its pursuers by the element of chance. The Celestial of all ranks, grades, and professions is a gambler. He is also, which does him more credit, a worker. Malay fishermen proceed in this manner: they leisurely build up a barrier of sticks along some bay or river mouth, at the seaward end of which they construct a series of cages leading one into another, just like the huge nets employed

for tunny-catching in the Mediterranean. When built, in the course of a few months—unnoticed in passing, unregretted when gone—the fisherman pays no regular attention to his trap. He trades here and there, turning over a capital of twopence ha'penny, hires himself as boatman for awhile, makes love, plays the tum-tum, fights a little, learns another page of the Koran, and otherwise follows his easy, reckless life ; whilst the mistress at home takes out just sufficient fish to give her small family a change of diet. Husband comes home singing, in a new petticoat, sports around for awhile, tells all the stock of fibs he has collected, and some day, when these amusements are all exhausted, he goes to examine the trap. Probably it is half destroyed by waves and big fish, but nothing he recks. Taking what prey may be found in the cells remaining, he disposes of them at Singapore, has another spree, repairs his machinery, and goes on again. Such a method does not commend itself to the Chinaman. He does his fishing, like all other things, with a will. There are some sort of fish, rarely met of course, which return a very large profit. The common sport to be expected gives a fair return, and so he works hard at the profession, always hoping for a prize, never discouraged. The most interesting race to observe which I have met is the Chinese. A thousand pities he should be so rude, uncouth, and flagrantly immoral, as to disgust at commencement of the study.

I do not recollect to have seen these fellows catch anything but flat fish, save twice. On one occasion a small saw-fish was left behind by the tide ; we came up just as he made his presence known in the most disagreeable manner. These creatures are dreaded in the Eastern seas much more than sharks. The latter is a cowardly brute at

the best, but saw-fish attack the intruder with senseless fury. I think it was at Santubong, in Borneo, that a woman was killed by one of them during my stay. Our little saw-fish—he could not have been more than two feet long—routed the Chinese gang in style. Yelling, they fled to shore, pursued by the laughter of our Malays, laughter that reached the hysteric point when the fat Celestial legs were seen to be terribly gashed. The fishermen took the jeering badly, as well they might, and those unwounded seemed anxious for a row, a wish most heartily shared by our boatmen. We kept the peace, and well perhaps for the Chinamen we did so, for never yet have the small and lithe Malays met these clumsy giants on the water without notable success, though the odds were ten to one. The other strange fish. I remember to have seen caught was a monster indeed. It had a smooth skin, dirty-yellow in colour, and fins much like a turtle's flappers. The Malays showed fear of it, though they seem more free from prejudice than any people I have travelled with.

But although rays, skates, flounders, and the like, form the bulk of a Chinese fisher's spoil, it must not be supposed that the sport is commonplace. Little cares he for the pleasure of the thing, but better fun I have never seen than in these battues. When all the breathless crew has been fastened on a monstrous skate, lifting it by main force up the muddy slope, I have hardly resisted the temptation to dash in. Had the gang been of another race, I would certainly have gone overboard to help ; but with Chinamen one must be cautious. They want but the shadow of an excuse to become offensive. I have seen skates or rays, six feet across, chased up and down, spears wobbling

masterless in their hide, the whole crew after, save those who sat upon the mud nursing their wounds and hallooing. A scene of turmoil delightful to behold ; great swirl of fish beneath, spear shafts quivering, men plunging, splashing, tumbling headlong ; and laughter everywhere—laughter loud and uncouth, but very genuine.

One day, as we stepped aboard at sunrise, our head-man proposed a sail across the straits. The wind blew fair and steady, the water sparkled joyously. Only ten miles off loomed the further shore, a purple depth of forest. "Set sail," we cried, "and follow the wind!"

Two hours after, our canoe lay beneath huge wooded crags. Whither our boatmen had taken us we had no idea. It might have been Perak, or a den of pirates. Without troubling about such questions, we were mighty keen for breakfast. In a lovely cove they had beached the canoe. Round three parts of the circle hung cliffs draped in creepers. Vast roots sprawled over them. Above stood trees of giant girth ; below a wilderness of ferns and flowers and tall grass. To right a cavern, green with moss all over. The bed of ashes and burnt brands round its entrance showed this to be a favourite halting-place of canoe-men. Two paths led up the cliff to right and left. The morning sun had not yet mounted high enough to reach the level of the dell, but those trees above gave it a radiant coronet.

Whilst our cook got breakfast I climbed one of the paths. After crossing a belt of forest some hundred yards wide, I came upon fields of tobacco. On a slope near by stood a very large house, and another somewhat above. Flags were displayed on each of them, and armed men hung round. Very much astonished, I turned back, and

questioned Ali Kasut—Ali of the Shoes—our guide, interpreter, and friend.

"That's the palace of the Datu Tumangong's mother," said he. "The Datu himself has a house here."

The traveller may always call upon a chief, but in this case we entertained a reasonable doubt whether the reception offered us would be exactly cordial, whilst, if all or any of the stories which circulate be true, the Tumangong is not a gentleman to trifle with. It was resolved to hurry breakfast over, and seek a more sequestered refuge from the heat. But the warders of the Tumangong keep their look-out like men whose heads may answer for their eyes. Long since our canoe had been signalled, conspicuous as it was by the Union Jack astern. But the chief was with his mother, and could not be disturbed for a small thing. As soon as he heard the news of our landing, two of his officers came down, followed by half-a-dozen soldiers of the body guard.

The invitation was for breakfast, which we had just finished, but the courteous Malays declared their master could not think of letting us go without an interview. After making such a toilet as was possible, we followed them, and the soldiers followed us in good order. They led the way to the nearer building, a great house raised on pillars of brick. Its material was all wood. A dozen soldiers stood in line on either side the steps, and presented arms as we went by. Not ragamuffins at all, but well-dressed, well-fed little men, looking fit and ready for any service. They wore blue bajos, or jerseys, white trousers, and a scarlet head-handkerchief. The national *sarong* was gracefully draped like a short petticoat about their waists, of different tartan in each one of them, but alike in the prevailing tint,

dull red. Every Malay is a dandy, and the Tumangong's body-guard thinks itself a cynosure. It was all armed with Enfield rifles, bright and serviceable.

The steps naturally led to a broad verandah. We passed before several officials or attendants, who hastily sat down and raised both hands above the head, in that graceful motion, old as the changeless East. Round a corner, in the part of the balcony overlooking the straits, we found the Tumangong. He was seated, of course, in an arm-chair. Two ancient men beside him enjoyed a like honour of the *fauteuil.* A reckless-looking chief—his brother as we heard—lounged against a pillar, gun in hand. A score of retainers, at the least, knelt or squatted on their hams around.

The Tumangong rose gravely and coldly to receive us. I have hinted that strange tales were rife in Singapore, concerning this young chieftain, who had but lately succeeded to his keen old father. They had led us to expect a truculent fanatic; we saw a big, stout, handsome man, scarcely darker than a Neapolitan, with large black eyes and fleshy features, brimming with good-humour. His big face was bare, as is that of his countrymen in general. He had prematurely run to fat. But at sight, we felt convinced he was maligned. Whether he was or no, I cannot tell.

No one, at least, could doubt his intelligence. From father to son, for generations, these viziers have shown a remarkable capacity. The grandfather of our host passed himself off upon the English Government as actual owner of the island on which now stands Singapore. He ignored his master, the Sultan of Johore, and managed to obtain the cash we paid. With this he reduced the Sultan to a mere name, keeping him in the palace, supplied with all

oriental luxuries. His successors have followed the same policy, and hence the rebellion I have spoken of. It failed, by-the-way, after some years' fighting, and the leaders were crucified. When the chiefs protested against such torture, which is quite contrary to Malay customs, the Tumangong replied, that he had found the description of it in the sacred books of England. So the humanitarians shut up.

Our host was not a man who could long keep up an injured tone. He quickly fell into familiar conversation. Arm-chairs were brought us. The interpreter rose stooping, and passed, bending double with hands above his head, to a place between his sovereign's seat and ours. The Tumangong said no word about our voyage, but Ali Kasut told us afterwards, that everyone knew how we had reached Changhi. He asked if we had seen his residence at Singapore, which has as many windows as a factory, and what we thought of it? I said that his house there was like others, only larger; that it interested travellers much more to see him thus, in his own country, under his native roof. This pleased him. He said, "After I've had breakfast, I will show you some of my things. I am not dressed yet. And I will have the mats laid down. These fools *will* play chess on them. But I have a much finer house in Johore. Let down the cloths!" Half a score of attendants rose in their stooping way, and loosened the curtains. They fell all round the balcony, with an effect of colour most excellent; but we preferred that beautiful view of the straits, rippling softly in the sunshine. Very soon, also, the smell of flowers grew heavy, in the close atmosphere. They were everywhere round, in men's hair, in pretty baskets, or just heaped upon a tray. No school-girl equals

an orang laüt, as the Malays call themselves, for love of flowers.

The Tumangong withdrew to breakfast with his mother, after exacting a ready promise to stay dinner. His wild brother now came forward and challenged us to a rifle match. A very different style of man was he; short, lithe, and yellow of complexion. He had the irregular features and small shadeless eyes characteristic of the common Malay type. I remember well his fierce expression and mocking smile. It was afterwards reported that he had deserted to the pirates, after a quarrel with his brother.

In the shooting match I think we were beaten, but the reckless conduct of this chief dwells particularly in my mind. He jammed the cartridge somehow in his rifle. After using all gentle means to extract it, he began such a series of gymnastic evolutions as frightened us laughing away. He took his gun by the barrel and hammered it against a tree; he pounded it on the earth; he unscrewed the nipples, rammed in powder, and screwed up anyhow. These exercises broke up the shooting party, and we withdrew to our dell for an hour.

About two o'clock the Tumangong sent for us again, and we went, like queens of Sheba, to view his magnificence. All the balcony, meanwhile, had been spread with mats, and hung with fine curtains round its outer side. The sun had now reached this quarter, and it streamed with gorgeous effect through the coloured stuffs. I asked Ali Kasut if these were of English manufacture, and scornfully he replied. Nothing European will a Malay use, in weapons or cloths, if he can buy the vastly more expensive products of his own land—and he is right.

A vision of glory shone the Tumangong, now dressed

for the reception. His head-kerchief was a web of gold, his *bajo* pale blue silk with golden buttons. A *sarong* exquisitely beautiful, woven in squares of black, blue, and gold hung from his waist below the scarf, which shone like liquid silver. A hidden *kris* pushed out this *kain bandara* in the quaint folds which are a fashion with Malays. Trousers of white satin, embroidered to the knee with heavy golden arabesques, completed this superb costume. The chieftain's feet were sandalled; between the great and the second toe a large knob, of one emerald, kept the gilt sole in place.

We frankly complimented our host on his appearance, and he was pleased. At a word his slaves brought out a pile of jewellery and fine weapons. Everything we saw was graceful, for the Malays have a sensitive taste. I remember no gems except emeralds, of which he had a quantity. Upon throwing back the scarf around his waist, we found the kris to be ivory-hilted, with large emeralds let in. They were all uncut, and they seemed third-rate stones, but the Tumangong observed that in Singapore he had some of the finest water. They come from his master's dominions of Johore.

Then he turned to the mats, which always are a pride of the Malay household. His chiefs and retainers had already chalked some of them in squares for their eternal chess, and the Tumangong indulged a burlesque fit of passion. The chess-players, squatting round, showed their teeth, black with *penang* (betel-nut). It was pleasing, in fact, to observe what good-humoured confidence seemed to reign betwixt master and vassal. The mats were exquisitely beautiful. They ran in sets of three, five, or seven, and the interpreter explained that the simplest shown us would

employ a family more than twelve months to make. Some of those from Natuna, of open work, occupy two women's lifetime, so they say. But this beautiful art is fast going to ruin, under the demand of Europeans untrained to recognise good work.

After showing all these things, the Tumangong offered us cigars, and settled for a talk. His absorbing interest centred in court etiquette. Three several times he asked if the Queen of England herself would see him should he go to London? I ought to state that the attendants had been ordered away, and only vassals and chiefs knelt or lounged on the mats round us. I assured him that the Queen would certainly receive a potentate of his rank. And I was right, for he visited England two years after and suffered a good deal of lionising under the title of Rajah. Be sure that our sovereign's courtesy was not wasted. Alone, amongst Malay chieftains, the Tumangong has seen England. Her might did not ruffle his jealous dignity, and he will be grateful. Another point on which our host showed particular anxiety, related to his title in English phrase. A slave brought us a packet of visiting-cards, inscribed, if I remember right, "His Excellency Abdul-rahman Datu Tumangong of Johore." The "Excellency" disturbed him, for he doubted whether that could be a proper equivalent for "Pangaran."

The grey-haired councillors asked questions which we found trouble in answering. They wished to know if England would object to an extension of the Tumangong's sway? If so, why didn't she interfere with Rajah Brooke, a Malay sovereign, who had just annexed Bintulu and Muka to Sarawak? The chief said nothing. Roused by these suspicious inquiries, we asked what force the

Tumangong possessed? No answer came, and presently Ali Kasut entered, crouching, to offer us His Excellency's own bath. He smiled, and motioned us away.

The bath was a large, round basin in the earth, midway between the mother's house and the son's. Clothes hung round it kept out the vulgar, but at least a score of chiefs, robed in silk and gold, came crowding within the barrier. They were not rude of course; a Malay never is. One spoke English so well that I asked his name. He started, stared, then walked smiling away. I had no notion of my offence; but amongst these people it is a bitter insult to ask anyone his name. The practical inconvenience of such a custom is very great. Every public office has its nomenclator, whose sole business is to learn and remember persons' names. So far is deference to this prejudice carried, that we have seen rajah and court sit idly waiting for an hour, whilst somebody could be found to name a witness; he meanwhile standing in the box and looking foolish. It was an assault case, which this man, a stranger, had watched. As he had no friends in the town to tell his patronymic, he was at length dismissed, and the prosecution fell through.

After the bath we returned to dinner on the balcony. The Tumangong, a strict Mussulman, like all Malays, neither drinks wine, nor smokes, nor chews *penang*, for that also is a stimulant. But he gives his guests most excellent claret, even in this country seat, and his cellar in the town is well supplied. The dinner was just such as you find in hospitable European houses yonder—a judicious medley of English and Malay *cuisine*. Nothing in particular do I recollect of it, saving the dish of capsicums or chillies, handed after each course. All the table-service was English, even

to napkins and finger-glasses. On a large vegetable dish these terrible condiments appeared, heaped up and smoking. The Tumangong and his two councillors took each a liberal spoonful, and began eating as we might eat cabbage. I could not believe my eyes, and tasted—nothing but whole capsicums, boiled, were these salamanders leisurely pulping in their cast-iron jaws.

Such was my experience of the Tumangong of Johore under circumstances that made his hospitality yet more honourable to him. What may be the actual fighting force he could put forward to help us in any trouble at Perak I have no idea, but the excellence of his armament, and his small fleet of river gun-boats, should give him an immense advantage over the neighbouring powers.

A HOLIDAY IN SOUTH AFRICA.

I.

THERE was a rumour of sickness in New Rush Camp, and ghastly stories flew about. Such a man had dropped down dead, with a "fifty carat" in his hand; such a quarter of the camp held more corpses than living souls; the corps of grave-diggers had been doubled, doctors were all dead, parsons dying of overwork. I write of the days before a registrar was numbered amongst our population; whilst morbid fancies ranged the domain of horror without a check. Not till the beginning of 1872 was it proved for a fact that the South African plains, hot and thirsty and vermin-haunted as they are, must be classed amongst the very healthiest regions of the world. The first list of official figures showed but eighteen deaths of persons grown up in a month! and the list included a Kaffir murdered, another burnt to death, and two white men "found dead." This in a population of 14,000 souls. But at the date of which I write, these comforting returns were still unthought of, and Bogey ruled our spirits. Those who were not so lucky as to have too much at stake *treked* into the colony by scores every day. Others, who did not venture to desert their treasure-pits, camped out by the Vaal or Mod river, at a distance from the town.

A party of friends invited me to join such a picnic, and very gladly I accepted. One of them purchased a waggon and six pair of oxen, whereof he made everyone free. Besides this, we had two handsome "carts" and seven riding horses, belonging to one or another; two cooks, a Malay and a Mozambiquer; wine and beer in dozens, with every luxury of potted meat and preserve that the fields could furnish.

On a cloudless morning, just as the pale green sky was changing to turquoise blue—just as the east began to glow above the heaps of snowy grit—just as the shadows, azure here as they are nowhere else, began to chequer the waste of grass and soil—we assembled at the rendezvous. The half-dozen servants who owed allegiance to S. were all astir with packages and portmanteaux. Horses and swearing grooms overflowed his spacious stables of canvas. In the neat cook-house—canvas also—there was clattering of coffee-cups and steam of fragrant muffins. Our host already perspired with hospitality as he flew hither and thither, in velvet coat, corduroy breeches, and riding-boots. One by one the party assembled, some riding, some driving, I the only walker. There were those dressed as if for Rotten Row in June, but wearing the "fashion" of their latest show there. Some had the flannel shirt and loose apparel usual in the colony; and one affected, even to extravagance, the dingy guise of the working digger, which guise could be best described in negatives. All, however, were well armed, and all except myself well mounted. We almost filled the pretty drawing-room of our host's canvas villa—an apartment lined with green baize, hung with pictures, and elegantly furnished.

Half an hour after sunrise we started. The long

waggon, with snowy tilt and massive body, first went creaking off. The hinder part of this vehicle carried a thousand pounds or so of miscellaneous baggage; in the fore part I reclined, all alone, upon a mattress. The others caracolled on horseback, or bounded in their carts along the track, through sloot and hollow, over stone and bush and withered bones of oxen, at topmost speed of their fifty-guinea horses. We passed along the edges of Dutoitspan digging, under shadow of the mounds where men sat "sorting" like mere machines. Crossing Bultfontein, where I saw my faithful Kaffirs working hard, though without supervision, we came out upon the veldt. The season of flowers here is the early spring, September and October, now long past, but there were still a few common plants in bloom—cassias and vetches. At a distance they seemed to spread a golden band across the plain, crowning each rise with blossom; but near approach revealed the trickery of perspective.

There is indeed no habitable country I have wandered in so utterly barren as South Africa, in its western and central districts. Long plain succeeds to plain, bounded, but scarcely broken, by flat-topped hills. Their deep ravines, unromantic though rugged, bear a few windworn thorns. There is not grass enough to green the level. Each blade springs apart, two to six inches from its fellow. Between, however long the blades, appears the ruddy sand, and the general effect is grey. A brook or spring is an unknown phenomenon. Where, very rarely, the abundant rain collects in a hollow, nor flies the ungrateful soil in mad haste seawards, it is poisoned by salts and acids that exude. The absence of water and trees in the landscape is not compensated by the mirage; for, though that delusion

is perpetually on hand, an experienced eye will never be deceived by it. No man who has visited South Africa could be surprised to learn that the country was bankrupt when diamonds were first announced. The most skilful and hard-working population could not make farming pay in such a land, and other resources it had none till our great discovery. But of all peoples, the laziest, the most ignorant, and the most hopeless are Cape farmers. Even the astonishing flood of wealth—not less than £12,000,000 sterling—which diamonds have poured into their hands, has not yet been able to stir up the population. It may safely be predicted, however, that a rate of discount of one per cent., and specie in the banks of Cape Town alone to the amount of £1,500,000—which is the last report—must soon revolutionise society.

With many a "liquor up," and many a joke, and many a snap-shot at antelopes and meercats, we wended our way. When half the distance had been covered, the horsemen and carts deserted my slow-travelling waggon, and pushed on. Game had hitherto been scarce, although there was no moment when a hundred head of springbok could not be counted at one view. But scarcely had the rifles passed from sight, when a swarm of antelopes compassed me about. What sportsman has not seen the like, and growled with rage to find himself helpless? The pretty creatures trotted up within twenty yards, and stood at gaze, hundreds of them, their dappled sides glancing in the white sunshine. I threw an empty bottle, not too hard, towards the most inquisitive. At the gleam of it a thousand tails gyrated furiously, four thousand tiny hoofs kicked up the sand. All the plain leaped into surging activity, and for a moment I was deserted. But they soon returned, and

with this graceful escort, sometimes all round, and sometimes crowded in mid distance, I travelled for two hours, until sundown found me at the place where the Riet and the Mod, the reedy and the muddy rivers, unite their scanty force.

In this waste of sand, water cuts itself a channel ever widening and deepening. Tall as they are, the willows by the river's edge, where our camp was pitched, could only show their topmost twigs above the level of the plain, so deep-worn is the gorge. The Mozambiquer who drove me wagged his big head gravely as he stood on the brink and marked the preparations down below.

"Get on," I said.

"No, baas," he replied. "Water come up in night-time; well! Baas inspan himself to light cart, and carry off; well! Where my oxen when flood come? In veldt; well! Where my waggon den? Carry away by flood, no? Where me? Drown in my waggon! Well?"

"Surely," I urged, "these paltry streams never rise so high and so fast. We are camping twenty feet above the water."

"Baas," replied the Mozambiquer, "I see dis here Riet, the skellum, rise twenty feet in half-hour, no? And in half-day I see him flood the veldt up to yonder hills! That eighty feet he rise." The man resolutely refused to risk the waggon and himself down below, so I gave in.

How pleasant was the meal around our fire! How sweet the twittering of birds, though songless, in the bushes! How gaily the water bubbled over the ford, its swirls gleaming in the sunset! Red glowed the tongue of land between the rivers, when we were already wrapped in tawny shadow. Swiftly that shadow climbed upwards

from branch to branch of the lofty trees, growing bluer as it went. The night damps rose as the sun left the water; they curled amongst the banks of reed, seeming to give them weirdly twists and motions.

And our meal too! No duke or alderman has tasted mutton like that we supped upon, unless he also have camped out, and have cut his own chop and cooked it on a stick in a wood fire. Then, the joyous anticipations of our holiday! At earliest dawn four of us proposed to undertake an expedition against the antelopes. Another, whose horses were not trustworthy in the chase, meditated war on hares and bustards, plovers and partridges, wild guinea-fowl, porcupines, franklins, quail, and all the innumerable living things that haunt a South African thicket. I myself looked with longing at a stream in which no hook is thrown from year to year, in which the mighty barba and the succulent white fish fatten undisturbed from one grey century to another. On these subjects the talk went round, whilst we lay inches deep in the yielding sand, whilst over our woodland camp the moon sailed airily, like a great lamp suspended glowing between heaven and earth.

And yet, and yet, all was not joy. For the sand was verily alive, and with f—e—s! And from a branch hard by hung the deformed and hideous carcase—threatening still in death—of a puff adder, killed on this very spot by the first comers.

None of us, however, were new chums, and we arose, fresh as the day, at the first tinge of green in heaven. Our Kaffirs, shrewd dogs, had slept on the veldt above, whither we followed them on after nights, for the f—e—s are only in river gorges. After a plunge, and a general

overhauling of our garments (in which I caught, to my own share, more than forty enemies, all swollen with my life-blood), we took coffee and separated.

No salmon fisher on the first day of the season takes keener delight in his preparations than had I in splicing neatly the reeds selected for my rod ; nor, let me say, has he an implement more tough or more pliable when completed, though he have paid ten guineas to Mr. Stewart, of Edinburgh. Reel and line and hooks I had brought from England.

In a back water, deep and sullen, where the current surged slowly round under a scum of muddy bubbles and floating rubbish—where a great willow trunk lay rotting in the water—where flies, more brilliant than the diamonds we dug, buzzed sleepily—where flocks of little birds, some golden-winged, some crested with scarlet, lit fearlessly beside me, and pecked and fluttered, twittering—there I baited with a locust and threw in. Another moment, my float had vanished, and in due time I hauled ashore a noble white fish nearly three pounds weight. He was followed by seven more, from a pound to four pounds in scale. With this handsome contribution to "the pot" I was fain to satisfy myself, for the barba would have none of my lures. The hunters returned with two springbok, pretty creatures about the size of a roe deer, fawn colour, marked along the side with a stripe of black that edges the snow-white belly. One of the hunters had been badly thrown, horse and all. The fowler brought in a string of birds, amongst them a wild guinea-fowl, large as the English turkey, and shot with a blue, metallic lustre. The cooks had gathered wild spinach by armsful. It is amongst the commonest of plants in this region, as is asparagus farther

south. To the Cape we owe both of these, the most distinctive in taste of all our vegetables.

After breakfast it was a delight to stretch in the shade, and hear the noise of running water once again. Rarest and most homelike is that babble of all the sounds of nature in this desert. After a while, from his lonely cottage by the ford, came to us the boer farmer in quest of supje (Mercian "suppy"), of raw spirits and a gossip.

This man had worked on Dutoitspan at its first discovery, and, though cheated on every hand, had made more than £500 before he got tired of regular labour. He offered to sell us peaches, and for the modest sum of sixpence his daughter, a grown girl, delivered to our messenger a liberal half-hundred; they came contained, however, in a vessel which—a vessel that—in short, a vessel that turned the stomachs of our party, though finer fruit was never grown.

And then a pleasant interlude came on. Fifty or sixty Barolong Kaffirs appeared on the farther bank, wending their way from some distant kraal in search of work at the diamond-fields. Some wore soldiers' coats of every regiment and fashion; some wore a flannel shirt shrunk with water and sun to the dimensions of a jersey. But nether garments not one possessed, and the most had no better covering than a jackal's tail. Fine men they were, not tall, but beautifully shaped. They dashed down the opposite slope full speed, shouting and yelling. At the water's brink such as had coats slipped them off, and all took the ford by threes, hand in hand. There were elderly men amongst them, and of these the youth took special care, grouping round them where the stream ran strongest. We are not used to see such kindness to each other on the

part of Kaffirs, but perhaps the old men were chiefs. The crossing took place in dead silence; but when the shallows were reached those in front bounded forward and performed a sort of dance upon the sandy shore. With yells that made the gorge re-echo, they rushed up and down, striking their thighs, and whirling their knobbed sticks to a prodigious height. Some of those landed ran again into the water, and engaged the laggards in clamorous war, splashing them and pushing them over on the slippery stones. They took no notice of us, nor did we make an effort to secure their services. Had the party been Zulus, there were men amongst us who would have found employment for every one, but the Barolongs, rightly or wrongly, are suspected of stealing diamonds. When their glistening black bodies were dry, they climbed the slope in a body, and passed from sight.

In holiday idleness we got through the broiling hours. A little thing amused us, so happy we were. As soon as the air began to cool, horses were saddled again for the chase. The injured man exchanged his steed for my fishing-rod, and in no small excitement I prepared for my first hunt of springbok. What instructions were given me I shall not detail, for they appear in the result. For nearly an hour we trotted over the veldt without seeing game. Marmots, like big rats, scuttled off on every side before our path; meercats, whose charms I have before described, galloped away in troops, with tails upright. Arrived at home, they sat upon their haunches just like kangaroos, and watched us with great bright eyes askance, the prettiest sight. Avoiding their burrows with utmost care, we trotted on. Five or six miles from camp, springbok appeared in a little herd, numbering perhaps 300 head.

We spread wide to outflank them, and charged from the distance of half a mile.

For a moment they ran together, bewildered, then flew off. "Flew," I say advisedly, for no other word does justice to a springbok's course. He clears the ground in bounds, 10 feet to 12 feet in height, and 20 feet long, hence his name. It is a wearisome mode of flight, much more curious than effective. Why an animal which lives in grassy plains, rarely broken by undergrowth, should use such a manner of progression, let Mr. Darwin explain; or, if it be urged that the springbok is a treking or migratory antelope, and that the Kalihari and other deserts which he loves are in many parts thick with brushwood, I would ask why this alone of all the treking species, leaps instead of running.

For the first mile we are distanced, though our horses go at their utmost speed. Verily it is a neck-or-nothing ride when one chases antelope on the South African plains! Every hundred yards there is a honeycomb of holes, the warren of marmot or meercat, or the burrow of an ant-eater, or the gigantic earth where a panther dwells. But none of these dangers must we heed, or no venison will there be for supper.

The hot air switches our cheeks like frost. In a whirlwind of dust we go. The game bounds on in leaps that seem more and more like the flight of wings; more and more fantastic is the chase as dusky clouds enwrap pursuer and pursued, as one's head dizzies, as one's limbs cramp. But the springboks are tiring! They cease to leap, and stretch themselves out like racers galloping. We gain—I the least, for my horse is shy after his morning's tumble, and goes more gingerly than those whose withers are unwrung.

The foremost horseman comes within a hundred yards.

With scarcely any check perceptible, he slips from the saddle, runs a yard or two, then sights and fires. Another comes within range and does the like. A third falls headlong backwards in dismounting. It is my turn. I recall the instructions given me: "Now, B.; now at 'em!" cries No. 1 as I rush past. My horse is almost amongst the hindmost of the drove. I sling the rifle on one shoulder, slip one foot from the stirrup, and get it on the crupper. "Now, now!" screams No. 2——

Reader, did you ever try to jump off a horse going full speed straight forward? I recommend the experiment as a problem in opposing forces. I *couldn't* get off! Clinging, with one foot in the stirrup and one on the crupper, I found it an impossibility to leap down without breaking a limb. I climbed back, dropping the rifle. At right angles the herd swept away, unhurt, so far as could be told. Venisonless we went back, but I was not much chaffed. The two who had dismounted safely had practised the trick from childhood, and also that other, not less difficult, of firing tolerably straight when every muscle of the body is quivering from the gallop. The fallen man escaped with a bad shaking.

Arrived in camp, we were astonished to find no appearance of dinner, except certain saucepans lying masterless beside dying fires. The answer to our shouts came pealing back from the river. Running there, we found all the servants assembled, busy and excited, at the water's edge. Two or three were spluttering in the stream. On the fallen trunk sat our lame companion, his rod bent like a whip, and reel run out. Just as we came up, the overtaut line gave way, the rod sprang back, and a groan of disappointment told the sad story.

"A barba, 50lb. weight if he was an ounce," mourned the fisherman.

"He feel like man in the water!" exclaimed a breathless Kaffir, clambering upon the trunk.

Deep were the vows of vengeance registered that night! Forthwith a Hottentot mounted and galloped by moonlight to the town, having it in charge to buy a twist of the strongest cord and a length of wire. For trustworthy hooks we applied to a blacksmith, since shark tackle seemed to be our want. And impatiently we awaited the Hottentot's return.

II.

THE Hottentot returned next day, bringing a hook strong enough for an ox chain, and a coil of tarred cord. In a few minutes a night line was constructed, and baited with a lump of mutton big as one's fist. We laid it at evening time. So well do I recollect that night of incidents that I could tell the tale without one reference to my note book. Grouped round the fire, we talked of barbas, and the facts mentioned greatly increased my curiosity to behold this extraordinary fish. What is its appearance you will shortly hear, and such information as to its habits as I was able to gather. Very soon, of course, the conversation fell into the usual theme—diamonds, and the matters thereto pertaining. There were those present who regarded the English rule, then just established, with no favourable eye. One, indeed, did not conceal his treasonable longing for a

Diamond Fields' Republic.* The project had been very seriously mooted not long before. England would probably have thought twice before spending millions in reducing us to subjection had we declared our independence. But what a pandemonium the country would have been with Mr. Parker, ex-sailor, for president, and his friend, the ex-watchmaker, financial secretary. I asked how the police of the young republic would be paid, for, of course, we were to have no taxes. "Police!" exclaimed one comrade; "who wants police? There is no crime on the fields; never yet was a community so peaceful and so prosperous." There was no denying this. But I declared that the carelessness of the authorities would tempt a saint beyond control. "Will you name to me," I said, "a single precaution used in transmitting our weekly mail bag, stuffed as it is with gems, over the desert between this and Capetown? The cart travels day and night, without escort, in charge of a Hottentot only, who owes no responsibility for its contents, and who takes passengers if he can get them. The post-offices where the bags are stored stand open all day, and it is not certain they are locked at night. Impossible but that a robbery should take place in no long time." And I was right; for, as soon as our prosperity began to fail, a series of thefts was organised on the gigantic scale.

"What was it the Totty said about a robbery in camp?" asked someone. The Totty, interrogated, said he had heard something about bad men at Hebron, on the river; heard they had killed somebody and taken his

* As everyone knows, the population of the Diamond Fields has since made a spirited but ridiculous effort to rebel.

diamonds ; didn't know if they were caught—and didn't care, evidently. Whilst listlessly answering from the other fire, where he lay rolled in a *kaross*, ancient and hairless, the Hottentot suddenly paused, listening. We listened too, but heard nothing. He rose to his feet, huddled in the fur, and peered across the misty veldt.

"What is it, Totty?" somebody asked, as the misshapen figure sank down again.

"Horses—go quick—stop now!" muttered the Totty. For a while longer we talked of police carelessness, then dozed off.

An hour after I was awakened by eager voices, the trample of hoofs, and the rattle of accoutrements. Jumping up, I found the camp encircled by shadowy horsemen, hid from the waist down in a chilly mist. Their heads, their bodies clad in corduroy, and the carbines resting on the thigh, shone clear in the moonlight, and we recognised the frontier police. The sergeant loudly challenged, calling us to account for ourselves, which was done in an instant, "Dismount and unsaddle," was the command ; obeyed with remarkable quickness. The men hobbled their horses and turned them loose in a moment, unpacked their rations, and drew round the fire. I could scarcely believe these active and cheerful fellows to be the same men I had often sneered at as the worst police existing—rude, slovenly, and indifferent. So indeed they are when employed at municipal duty, for which, as they say, they never enlisted. But put the frontier policeman on his own veldt, with horse and rifle, and the wild criminal in view, the world may be vainly searched to find his rival. This party was in quest of the Hebron thieves, who had escaped

our way in the hope of reaching that refuge of all despair, the Transvaal Republic. Murder there had been none. We instantly remembered the sounds our Totty had heard scarcely an hour before, and the sergeant gathered from him what indications he could give. All our party were anxious to join the hunt, and a rapid saddling ensued. I, who had no mount, found myself abandoned even by the dogs. I was asked to watch the ford, whilst our servants took post up and down the bank at long distances. Half an hour expired, the police fetched up their horses, and presently they rode away, vedettes in front and on either flank, volunteers from our camp in centre. If need arise, these excellent trackers will quarter a space miles broad in this manner, though each section of the party be out of sight. Every man is supposed to carry a compass, but seldom will you see it consulted. The frontier police meet Bushman or Coranna on his own savage ground with terrible success.

Left alone, I watched my friends ride away over the moon-white veldt. At fifty yards' distance the looming mist devoured them, creeping up and up the horse's legs, over his crupper, until with one gulp the rider's head went down. For a while longer I could hear the jingle of carbine ring, then all grew still. I lay down beside the fire, now heaped up and merrily burning. The loneliness of a night watch in this country, is as that of an uninhabited world. Neither wild beast nor wild men are generally to be feared, and a person unfanciful will camp out for years without comprehension of aught to stir the pulse. But in the brain of one possessing imagination there grows by times a horror like madness when the night

mists stalk and writhe—an airy barrier in the vastness; when moonlight carves strange vistas through the flat, and shadows fall heavy where no object stands. Then terror of the unseen and the unreal gets hold upon a man—then the desert's self takes an unsubstantial life. To his straining ear comes the sough of that wind which blows "all night in a waste land where no man comes nor hath come since the making of the world." Such sounds, such nameless fears possessed me, sitting alone in the void. It was relief unspeakable when the slow dull thud of hoofs broke the deadly silence. I sprang up and challenged. The voice which answered was that of our companion hurt two days before. He had found himself unable to ride with the others, and had come back to his bed in the waggon.

With the knowledge of fellowship my terrors vanished, leaving me only wakeful. Our friend slept heavily, and no talk was to be expected from him. I thought of the night-line, and presently went down to try it. Very black and grim the gorge appeared between white crest of bank and silver rippling current. I raised the line, which was tied round a tree, and leisurely drew in the slack. Suddenly a tug, a splash; the coil ran out in one lightning rush, and creaked in straining at its tether. A monster indeed, and one to be handled tenderly by a man who valued his fingers! I ran to the waggon, breathless with excitement; but my sleepy friend declined with emphasis to help. He said a barba was a something cross between a toad, a sand-eel, and a pug dog; and he wouldn't stir for one of the three, nor for the lot combined. Returning, I tried by main force to drag the fish to shore. As well engage in wrestling with an elephant. To play him was,

of course, equally absurd; he would have cut my hands off in some of his rushes; so that all I could do was to keep him moving—not an easy nor a safe employment. After every dash he sulked in the mud. I shortened line as fast as possible, winding the slack round a stout piece of timber of such length that I could grasp both ends firmly when he tugged. Twice, however, he caught me unprepared, wrenched the stick straight, and unwound it in a flash. So things passed till the moon went down, and still no help came. We had set our bait in a deep crevasse just above the ford. Once or twice in his plunges, the monster crossed the shallow, when he threw up such a mighty tail as awed me fairly. Very slow he was to give in; but the sulks grew longer, the rushes less violent. After two hours' labour I brought him, as I supposed, right under the bank. It was now pitch-dark beneath the shadow of the cliff, but the moonbeams still rippled across the ford. I could just see, or fancy, a great white belly gleaming in the pool. Holding a bush, I felt its gigantic rotundity, smooth and soft as an eel, but not slimy. At that moment the sudden noise in camp told that our party had returned. I tried to recover my footing without due care—the bush gave way, and headlong I fell in.

The water was deep, and I reached shore again in a moment, kicking the huge body that floated beside me. But to climb that crumbling bank was no easy task; and whilst I struggled, the horrid thought occurred, Suppose my fish were to fish for *me!* He was big enough, I knew, to give a fearful bite; and the stories told round our camp-fire had hinted at the possibility of danger. I felt sick for an instant, then turned, and swam with all speed

to the shallow. A dozen strokes brought me to footing; I gained my feet, and looked back. Within four yards of me a great grey shadow was pursuing! I shouted, stumbling, slipping, and splashing on the glassy rocks. Just as the others came down the bank, I got ashore in a monstrous fright. The great shadow lay on the surface, showing an expanse of white belly more like that of a sow than of a fish; it rested quiet now, at the full tension of the cord. We got a waggon-rope, noosed the gigantic head, and pulled him merrily ashore.

I should think this barba weighed about eighty pounds. Specimens four times this size have been killed in the Orange River, as I was told by Mr. Gers, of the Hoek Farm. In the great drought of 1863 this mighty stream ceased to run, dwindling to a chain of pools, in which the barba could be seen, as Mr. Gers described them, like sunken canoes lying on the bottom. The fish is really a *batrachus*, I believe. The reader will get an excellent idea of it in examining our common bull-head or miller's-thumb. It has neither teeth nor scales, but the mouth is so enormous and the throat so wide, it can scarcely feel the want of teeth. The ferocity of it is extraordinary; but I cannot credit, without more evidence than came in my way, that the barba would, under any circumstances, be dangerous to man. He is good eating, but a great deal depends upon the cook. I never saw one captured of less weight than five pounds, and the small ones give most sport. No fish exist in the Vaal or Orange rivers besides barba and white fish, so far as I could learn. In the colonial rivers there is another species, said to have the faculty of becoming torpid when water fails; it then rolls itself in mud, and

patiently waits for rain. They say it will thus endure for years, reviving when put into water. Very small barbas, a different species, perhaps, are found in the rare and scanty springs. But Cape Colony is worse supplied with fish than any land I have travelled in.

A NIGHT IN GRANADA.

So the people of San Salvador have nearly rebuilt their town after the late earthquake! Six times already San Salvador had been tossed up, wrenched, grappled, and beset, till tower and church and cottage lay prone in a cloud of dust. This last catastrophe makes the seventh. But seven destructions, apparently, have not rooted out the love of birthplace in her sons. They are building up their homes again, like to the city I remember, cautious only in the respect that no house shall have a second story. Who will call the Central Americans fickle after this? With all a fine province in which to choose a site, they cling to this one spot, manifestly abhorred of heaven. It has no particular advantages visible to the foreign eye; or, if advantages it have, the inhabitants don't use them. There is a river, but no commerce. The city has indeed associations, traditions, of no small interest to the student of Indian history, but San Salvador is so barbarous as to boast its freedom from "Carib" blood. It may, however, be contested whether Indian or negro make the worse admixture with the white man, and of mulattoes San Salvador possesses a number incomprehensible. To the stolid and presumptuous obstinacy of this race may possibly be owing the persistence

with which the Salvadorians cling to their fated capital. What manner of courage it is they show, what awful forces they defy, I propose to tell you in this paper, taking my text in personal experience. Not in San Salvador, however, did I enjoy the adventures here narrated. The newspaper paragraph has but recalled a dreadful "scare" which befell me in the rival capital of Nicaragua, on the 10th of January, 1866—a day not likely to be forgotten in Granada.

It chanced that several foreigners were in the town, besides myself and my travelling companion—a young Californian, on his way to "see the world;" two gentlemen connected with the mines of Chontales, whereof great things were expected at that time; a man of science from England, geologist or entomologist, I forget which; a professional gambler, "sportsman" he called himself,—a Norwegian, on the home track to enjoy a fortune hardly earned; these, with a young doctor from the States, whose diploma "had got lost," made up our motley crew. We were nearly all young, even the gambler, who boasted that no other profession would have earned him £20,000 at the age of twenty-four. The amusements of Granada are generally found wearisome up to a certain age, unless one be to the boredom native. So we resolved to give a ball. Whose proposition this festivity was I don't quite recollect, but, when it had been suggested, every one of our party found some peculiar attraction therein.

Said my dear friend Jack, "Now we shall see what these folks can do. They won't work, they don't know how to play. I believe they have concentrated all their energies upon the fandango."

Said Schmit, the sportsman, "Some of the hombres

might have an ounce or two. I guess I'll look up the old fixins, an' git ready for consequences. I've seen more'n a sample of Greasers, an' I tell you your ball will be flat as a skatin' floor without my bank."

"Excellent idea," exclaimed the scientific man. "No doubt the Indians will show us their ancient dances, and we may fancy ourselves Conquistadores, watching the virgins of the sun dancing before Montezuma!" A soft man, rather, was our scientific.

"My!" said the gentleman on his travels, "this will be something, you bet! I guess I own a pair of pants will raythe delight them Muchachas. I got 'em for Job Skindle's wedding up at Sacramento, and they was talked of large. A mite long in the leg, maybe; but I'll take in a reef."

So, with universal good wishes, we made arrangements for our ball.

First we hired an empty house, which, when snakes and cats had been dislodged, young trees uprooted, and bats informed that their roosts were wanted for that night, gave us a decent ball-room. From Massaya four Indian fiddlers were engaged, and Granada proved equal to the furnishing of two flutes. Aguardiente and claret we laid in largely, and subscriptions in kind for decoration were invited.

The scientific man lent us some excellent preparations of natural history. Schmit fixed up two buffalo robes, some feather fans, the model of a bark canoe, and a Pawnee idol. The Californian furnished us with portraits of his greatest friends and of several ladies, more or less cherished in his memory. One of the miners insisted on displaying some fine specimens of quartz, which he suspended on strings. The doctor gave nothing special; but

the way he chuckled to himself during the consultation hinted some secret resolve.

The night arrived—a soft and cloudless evening. Stars sparkled out, whilst yet the Western sky burnt orange. Under that gentle light the ruined city took a softness not its own. Its streets, so lonesome by day, straight and dusty, loomed romantic. Over them hung palm trees that glittered icily in the rising moon. The very ruins, gaunt monuments of ruthless war, took a mystery belonging not to them. Very gently the night wind rustled in the green garlands round their heads. There was no warning anywhere of the wild work to come.

I crossed the plaza about eight o'clock. Nearly all the population was assembled there, chatting, love-making, in the moonlight, a picturesque crowd. But as I passed, a cicale suddenly broke into song, so loud, so shrill, that it topped the murmur of the people. It sang from the loop of a big bell, standing upright on the shattered pavement beneath its broken campanile, which threw a tufted shadow across the grass. Drawn by the sound, great bats swung from aloft, and flittered almost in my face. A night-hawk skimmed past on ghostly and noiseless wing, sank in the bare, burnt herbage, and rose again under my very feet, with the faintest twittering. To such desolation is reduced the stately capital of Hernandez de Cordova.

The doctor lived in one of those huge palaces which attest the ancient glory of Granada. Few of them escaped the flames when Henningsen, Walker's lieutenant, set all the city "in a lowe, and slokened it with blood." But those spared of the fire are built to withstand the rage of time. There were no lights behind the windows' heavy grating; and my hammer at the doors, full ten feet high,

brought no response. I pushed them open, and entered the vast bare hall.

It was dark as a grave.

"Doctor!" I cried; "Doctor!" and was groping towards the opposite door, which opened, of course, on the courtyard, when a chain rattled sharply behind me, and arms of overpowering strength grasped me about the waist. I thought they belonged to the doctor, and laughingly tried to disengage myself. Horror! The circling arms were covered with close, fine fur, and a long growl warned me to rest quiet. My nerves were young then and stout. I knew the doctor's puma had me in his grasp, and though sick with fear, I remained still, hoarsely shouting.

The brute did not loose hold, but he kept his claws hid in their velvet, and rubbed his smooth head against my shoulders, purring like a gigantic cat. I felt his hot breath on my neck, and his body was pressed against mine by iron muscles. It seemed an age before the doctor answered, coming with a light across the yard. At a word from him the beautiful beast leaped from me, rolling like a kitten on the ground, biting its chain. I staggered into the doctor's arms, which could scarcely hold me, so frightened was he.

This puma was to have been our friend's contribution towards the ornament of the ball-room, and he had fastened it by the doorway in readiness to take with him; but without difficulty I persuaded him to let it stop at home. A stiff glass of brandy brought me round, and we set off together through the moonlit and solitary streets.

The ball had commenced before our arrival; had, in fact, already reached that point when popular enthusiasm demanded the national dance.

Such music as the band struck up I cannot describe. It was a mingling of *furia Espanola* and Arab sensuous dreams, with the melancholic harmony of Indian strains. The result was madness, nothing less. Under the influence of that music one felt one's reason go, not gradually, but all at once. A demoniac possession got hold of us.

The musicians leaped to their feet, and ground their instruments with a passionate flourish. The dancers whirled in a cloud of dust, jerking out interjections. It was a Witches' Sabbath! I, looking on, shouted with the rest. Legs and arms spun together. Such a dance is the Nicaraguense!

The music ceased as suddenly as it began. Girls, half fainting, were led to their seats. The dust settling down made us all cough like inmates of a consumptive hospital. As the enchantment ceased, our bare walls, scantily covered with flags and blankets, looked more miserable than before. The fat old mulatress who dispensed refreshments—honest creature enough!—seemed a foul Megæra. Through doors and windows, meanwhile, streamed ivory moonlight, flecked with plumy shadows of the palms. And there was Schmit, vulture-eyed, superintending the arrangement of a faro table. Filled with a nameless disgust, I went out.

Others of our guests followed the example, perhaps with a like feeling. I strolled from house to house in the street, for nearly all were open. Representations of the Nativity, a Christmas fashion of Nicaragua, were yet on view for the edification of the pious. Shall I dare to tell what I saw? It will need the gravest assertion of veracity, the which I here give without reservation of any kind, to convince an English reader that this account is not exaggerated. But it is not only true, it even contains not all

the truth, for there are things common in Central America which I dare not mention.

This, then, I saw, or the like of it, in half a dozen houses. A stage of green baize, three to five feet long, and two to four feet deep. At back, a toy bedstead, with silk or satin hangings. In bed, a penny doll. Hanging over it, another penny doll, dressed in white satin. In front, with his back to the bed, a third, in monastic costume, twice as tall as the woman—he to represent Saint Joseph.

All round, disposed according to principles of order incomprehensible, a crowd of dolls, beasts from "Noah's Ark" boxes, figures off cakes, and plaster-of-Paris images. On the Tower of Babel was set out a doll's tea-service. Tin soldiers marched in order undisturbable under parsley trees, though against them, smiling, but terrible, advanced a china shepherdess with the evident resolve of eating up those little warriors. The lamb she led scowled ferociously. Herod, near by, wore a tinsel helmet. Pontius Pilate shone in a breastplate made of four spangles sewn together. Flying Cupids, each provided with a decent spangle about the waist, hovered above the scene. In the immediate foreground, before the footlights, stood as many images of the sort retailed by Italian boys in Europe as the householder could lay hands on. Victor Emmanuel, Garibaldi, and the late Emperor Napoleon were everywhere represented. The Venus di Medici, attired in satin, had her place in several shows; in one, where her figure was larger, she was posted outside the stage for adoration of the faithful.

In another place I saw half a dozen women telling their beads before Venus in a blue petticoat; and, not far off, I

observed a common statuette, of plaster, representing a ballet girl pirouetting, dressed in blue silk, and offered for worship—not in vain. Such is the religion of Central America. Were not the old idols more dignified ?

It was near half-past ten when I returned to the ball-room. Before reaching the place I heard a murmur of evil omen. Jack was standing in the crowd outside, and he hastened up on seeing me.

"Schmit is in a row," he said, "as I knew the fellow would be. They accuse him of cheating at faro. Shall we interfere, or leave him ?"

"My dear fellow," I answered, "we have knowingly meddled with the substance called pitch, and are defiled. Let us not mess our fingers more deeply by abandoning a comrade in a fix. At the same time, I don't believe Schmit has cheated on this occasion."

Nor do I even now. There is a sort of honour amongst "sportsmen" in America, as there was with the Barry Lindons and Casanovas of last century. Schmit would have swindled his own father in the ordinary way of business, but would not have put an innocent partner into "the hole."

We pushed through. The orchestra was playing a waltz of the *trois temps* species, and two or three couples circled round. But the crowd was gathered in the left-hand corner, where our comrade, pale, but easy, dominated the hubbub—it was not the first time that he had figured as the hero of a similar scene. That man's life, could it be told, would bear the record of a hundred quarrels more perilous by far than this. His fortune had been slowly won through a succession of them. What were we, you murmur, who joined such a man on terms of equality ?

Go for a travel in Central America and you will understand.

The row was growing hot. What was the gravamen of the dispute I don't know, but it had passed the bounds of argument. A score of voices were raised in furious contention, two score of fists were brandished in the air, round Schmit. As I pushed roughly through, followed by others, the moment of action arrived. A tin sconce, wrenched from the wall, struck the gambler on his forehead, and battle joined. It was just one of those wild *mêlées* only seen in Ireland and in America.

We struck all ways, we kicked any limb in reach. The crowd did, that is, for I was early levelled. But in a second's time, a burly Nicaraguan fell across me, and, unable to rise, did battle horizontally.

The big brute struck with his knees, and bit, and tried to throttle me. I pounded at his head. Round and upon us were trampling feet, unbooted for the most part. My adversary's shirt, for coatless he had answered our invitation, yielded at once, and he fought half naked. A heavy foot of some person unknown laid me flat again, just as I aimed a finishing blow at my antagonist. He threw himself upon me, twisting both paws in my shirt collar, and so lay, panting, but throttling me, his face on mine. I could not use my arms. The dusty mist turned red. I was choking—and then—I thought it fancy—the floor upheaved beneath us.

I was tossed up, and fell again, and lay rolling. Fury and pain had been the burden of the uproar hitherto, but now it was a shout of fear. Hurrying feet swept over us, and tripped, and tumbled headlong. My enemy gave way, screaming "tremblor!" with bloody jaws.

In an instant the room was cleared, save for half a dozen who scrambled on the floor. I rose to my feet, dizzily. The air was so full of dust no man could see a door. A scream of terror filled not the house only, but the street. Two or three fallen sconces burnt on the floor, dimly, and by the table overthrown flared fire, red in the dust, where a shrieking wretch struggled to put out his ignited shirt. I cleared my eyes, my brain, and ran towards the spot where a door must be. As I ran, the earth surged up again, and tossed me as one is tossed on a see-saw. The sconces rattled to the ground, rolling and going out. The yell outshrieked itself, and crash—crash—the plaster fell. Red flames appeared on the ground level. I found my feet, only to fall again. Voices of men had died away, or were lost in the dread tumult—crackle of beam, rustle of stout walls settling, crash of tiled roof and timbers. Dust whirled so thick, I could not see the fires, if fires remained. Door there was none. I sat upon the ground, choking, lost, amazed that death held off. Again and again shivered that sick heave. Unseen objects, falling all round, made the earth shake, but none struck me. Suddenly, after an awful crash, I saw blue light shimmering close by. I gained my feet and leaped towards it, tripped over fallen rubbish, and fell prone into the street. Before my senses went, I saw the whole house I had just left sink bodily down, like a house of snow, leaving naught behind but thickening dust.

Some time after, I opened my eyes and surveyed the ruin. Six or eight houses in sight lay overthrown. Smoke and dust rose from them in spirals, and small tongues of flames glanced here and there.

The street was still, but from a distance came dull

murmurs, as of a people chanting in mournful cadence. Oh, but it was lovely, the still, blue night above! Not a cloud in the moonlit sky, not a breath of wind. The palm tree over against me drooped its smooth leaves like a banner, unruffled by the convulsion. Bruised and bewildered, I dragged myself towards the plaza. Everywhere ruin! I passed several houses in a blaze, which none tried to put out. But in the older and handsomer quarters damage was not common. The Conquistadores built for an age, if not for all time, and the powers of earthquake do not easily prevail against their labour. As I went on, through fire and smoke and dust, feeling often a dizzy quiver under foot, the faint hum of chanting grew louder. It came from the plaza.

Soon I heard it clearly, and soon I saw the crowd. First in the march, circling round the plaza, came priests bearing the Host. Bells tinkled before them, and behind a half-score Indians, drawing such wails of terror from their fiddle-strings as never breathed from violin before. Followed all the population of Granada, black clad for the most part, bearing red torches, and moaning to the fiddles. Some corpses were borne along. What faces were those I saw, living and dead, in the ruddy torchlight! Madness burnt in the swollen eyes, madness of fear. Mouths quivered and worked in chanting broken words.

Now and again a woman's scream, shrill and sudden, rang out, and was answered by incoherent wails. I dream of that procession sometimes, seeing again black robes, red flare, and burning, agonised, blood-stained faces; in the midst a calm grey mask, quiet for ever, resting on men's shoulders. I hear the fiddles scream, and the cry of a whole people agonised—ten thousand voices chanting the

"De Profundis." I remember what a night and day we passed. Eighty-three earthquakes shook Granada in those twenty-four hours. No safety anywhere, no escape from the horrible shiver. In the house, death from above; in the open, death gaping below. We all encamped upon such clear ground as there was; but lo! the plaza split across, and yawned, and closed again in all men's sight. No safety! for the lake swept its beach with such wild waves, boats could not live, and far inland men perished.

A time of terror without name, when one seemed to lie under a nightmare of living reality. A fortnight the horror lasted, each hour a torment of suspense. Then quiet returned, and Granada set itself to rebuild, to dig out furniture, to bury its dead, as they are now doing in San Salvador.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ANGLE.

I.

"GOING to flyfish in this weather? You will come back with an empty basket!" Nay, I know the chances well, Salmasius. Heat and thunder and time of year are all arrayed against the fisherman in July; but suppose I love to have it so? Proud may he be who staggers home against the wild March wind, or against April sleet, bending beneath his creel. Proud have I been in that case, and yet, for me, the joys of such a day lie rather in the thing done than in the doing of it. When frozen fingers hold the rod, small pleasure gives Leviathan ensnared. He is but half a fisherman who thinks that catching of trout is the one sole end and delight of fishing. All great professors of the art, from Lady Julia Berners, who first perhaps made a fly-rod—and a strange one, too—five hundred years ago, down to Mr. Stewart, of Edinburgh, who teaches us the science of killing trout in still water—all insist upon it, by precept or practice, that a fisherman must have the poet's eye, or will miss half his pleasure. And when could that eye be exercised more delightfully, where could it dwell in subtler ecstasy, than on a hot summer's day by the banks of a Kentish stream? Grant that the fish do not rise, is it nothing to stretch on the crisp,

short grass, burnt like incense into perfume, to "hear the dewy echoes calling," to watch the crisping ripples of the stream, and "tender curving lines of creamy spray?" Nor is it so sure as the dogmatist would have that trout will not rise in hot July. I remember—but if this writing were to be the chronicle of an angler's reminiscences it would expand into a volume.

And so, with scant hopes of fish, but in great joy of mind, I leave the train at a little roadside station festooned with roses. Only a hundred yards on the dusty highway, and a small ancient path, well remembered, opens on the left. It leads across a field, planted with oats last time I saw it. Through what scenes strange and terrible my devious feet have wandered since that June day of 1870!—through battle-fields of France, through grey, parched plains of Griqualand, sprinkled with diamonds, through forests of Ashantee, death-haunted. But this fair scene has ever remained, as still, as sweet, as then. I climb a hill, shoulder deep in corn. Waves of shadow pass over the wheat; its spiky heads toss together like billows breaking. A miracle of beauty is the glow of poppies in each furrow. Gustave Doré, and many a greater man before, has essayed to paint that loveliest of all gardens; but wiser, I think, is he who should stand and gaze with infinite wonder, nor attempt to match the inimitable. From the hill's brow a view to challenge the world for rivalry opens upon one. No mountains cloud-piercing are there, no cataracts tumbling. Smooth slopes encircle the valley, slopes brown, and yellow, and green of all shades. Dark elms and green-grey ash trees spring from the hedgerows; oaks, I notice, are few. Beneath winds a shallow stream, through fields of the liveliest verdure. Silvery willows

shade it, and little woods of orchard trees, through which peep the village roofs. Away to the right, "amongst its tall, ancestral trees," stands a stately English home, such as Mrs. Hemans had in her mind. Only gables of red brick may be seen from here, but I know the old dwelling looks out upon the valley from bay windows large as a modern house wall. A light wind sweeps the hill, bowing the wheat, turning the silken underside of leaves. But down below all is still, and green, and hot. The sun pours down such steady fire as rarely we know in England; but a sky, white-dappled on the horizon, gives promise of wind to come.

Down the hillside to a lane—the loveliest, most tangled, most flowery lane that ever was—so one would say who knew not a score just like it within the mile round. Its banks are high, crowned with a heap of privet and maple, tied, bound together in a net of hop, and woodbine, and shy nightshade. The snowy privet is in flower, offering the idle passer-by that same easy moral it suggested ages since to Virgil. A home this country, I take it, for the elephant sphinx—that lovely "arrangement in pink and brown," as Mr. Whistler would describe it, whereof the larva loves bed-straw above all food. Other weeds—a thousand of them—flourish by the road-side. Scabius shows its tufted crowns, wild snapdragon springs—a primrose blossom—poppies flaunt crimson, brambles thrust out their flowers from the mass, rough, yet most delicately tinted. And so, out from the lane, beside a silver osier bed, to the river.

Alas, alas, for the visions of my fancy! All lies upon dry land as I had pictured. The sunshine falls as hot, as still, upon a landscape green with all tints of emerald. But

the very stream itself, the swirling, babbling brook, fretted with sunlight as with diamonds? Is this brown torrent the representative thereof? Verily it is. To such complexion comes the most pellucid stream after a deluge like that of Saturday. For form's sake, to give oneself a countenance, I splice my rod, and throw for an hour, until the fierce noon heat comes on, and nature gives the pretext for a pause. I take it at the shallow below a mill, supine beneath a shimmering poplar. Of unknown depth might be that reach in front, so brown it is; but I know one might wade it with knees unwetted. There are no rises where, were the stream bright, its bosom would dimple over; but, now and again, I mark the swirl and parting of the water where Leviathan reveals his passage. One longs for the freedom of the north country, to cast off flies and delicacy in favour of weighted worm and the old-world simple arts. But honour forbids.

The heat pours down in waves; my horizon, purple-grey with seed-tassels of grass, quivers as if on fire. A languid, thankful worship of the sun fills idle man. Old tags of poetry pass through the mind. Where does that line occur, and what its context, "They gather kingcups in the level mead?" Kingcups there are none in season; but yellow cole-wort blows upon yonder bank. Yes, and broad sword-grass bends in the unaccustomed flood, and blue forget-me-not lies half-submerged, and water-nettles, surest of balm for scratches of the fly, or sharp-toothed "monarch of the brook." Surely that line comes from Thomson! "If from his hole beneath the tangled root, you chance to snare the monarch," &c. Brook and root don't rhyme though. And, is it hole or haunt? I "know not, neither can remember," as Mr. Swinburne observes.

A welcome diversion! Six hens and a cock creep under a fence, and scurry, with wings half open, to the bank. Upon the edge they pause in disappointment manifest, though incomprehensible, look up the stream and down, jerkingly, perkingly, then stroll disconsolate away. A flock of wild ducks, wing-clipped, reveal themselves under a bush, flapping out in sudden terror of a water-rat. Driven from shelter they take the opportunity for a bath. Swallows and squealers do likewise, dipping in airy gyrations. A young one rests his weary little wings upon a hanging chain, clasps it in dainty claws, and watches me through the brightest, gentlest of eyes. Old chanticleer descends again, in search of that something needful to his happiness, which I cannot as yet identify. He goes not back, but stands on the brink, pecking and jerking with impatience. I see now what it is. Weeds begin to show above the surface. The water lowers. They have shut down the mill-gates during dinner-time. Now or never must that rat take his plunge if he have it in view to gain the other bank by water. Slily, oilily he gets afloat, abandoning the alder's screen. Once out, he paddles in desperate terror, the wave before him parting at his snout. Poor little rat! How easily now could one drop a fly on that soft, brown back; but was ever fisherman cruel? It is atrocious calumny to say so. With delight he watches all things that live, and, "if his hap it be," he aids them to their innocent delights. Sure, it is pleasant for trout to see a fly, or eke to take it; and upon my honour and conscience, I don't believe we hurt them in the catching, unless a bad scare give pain.

Lower the current falls, and lower. Chanticleer and his family are pecking in mid-stream upon oozy beds of

that weed accursed, given us by America. Strange it is what pains are needed, what money, and what time, to acclimatise a plant or creature useful to mankind, whilst weeds and animals noxious appear to delight in spreading. It is more than doubtful whether we yet have planted salmon in New Zealand, but there's no doubt at all about the rabbit. The eucalyptus has not hitherto done well in England, but the Canadian weed is choking our very ditches. Thistles are a curse to Australia, but French beans at San Francisco are synonymous with luxury double gilt. Other weeds become visible as the stream subsides, and lays them open to the investigations of our poultry. Water daisy, just out of flower, clings together in a mass. Yonder, on the shallow spit, I see some broad pale leaves of buckbane, the which old people used to smoke in days remembered by the elder of us. A gentleman, not without fame and honour in the world, has told me how he recollects collecting buckbane for his grandfather—swimming for it in a marsh where now stands a crowded suburb. The grandfather boasted that he stood upon ancient ways, disdaining tobacco. Will not this habit account for the antique pipes, older by centuries than Raleigh, or even Hawkins, which have found such distraction for the learned?—These weed-beds are a very lure for birds, if only one keep still. Delightfully various is the collection before me. Sparrows and finches everywhere, some feeding, I think, upon the buds or seeds, but most upon insects sheltered in the ooze. Wagtails of both kinds mingle, justifying their name to the uttermost. Two yellow-hammers I note with surprise. But what have butterflies or bees to do on these moist islands? They attend the congress in some numbers, but keep well away from

their natural foes. The butterflies assemble in a group, white ones all, clustering perhaps over some dead minnow. In Central America I have seen their brethren do the like by a thousand together. Is it not strange that the daintiest and loveliest of created things should mostly be lured by carrion?—

What sweet sounds fill the fisherman's ear in this hot pause of the day! sounds all in semitone, save a dog's distant bark, musical and lonely. It is a murmur in various keys, of various notes—murmur of birds, and bees, and water, and fitful pulse of wind. It falls "dim on the ear, and deep, as the deep, dim soul of a star." Dirty as most, dirtier than all others of village children, maybe, are those small citizens whose babble and laughter faintly reach me across the brook; but is any sound of music to compare with their unconscious melody, wafted soft through the deep-bosomed trees, toned by a heated and drowsy air?—

The wild ducks have waded to my feet, and fearless there pursue their gentle pleasures. Softly, with tenderest of crooning voices, with silvery tinkle of water, they preen themselves. They sleek the blue wing-feathers with sweet chuckling of the bill, almost inaudible, and stretch themselves upright, and drop back into the stream with a coo of quiet happiness, most grateful to be heard. Their murmurs, and their gentle flapping, well chime in the delicious harmony, whose song and burden, audible, I think, is summer. A fig for your April fishing. Early in the spring-time, on raw and windy mornings, if Mr. Kingsley will allow me to say so, you may catch trout indeed, but with no divine orchestra of sun and blooming mother earth, communing in joy together. And

of that is the soul of fishing. Alas, that one must drag out a twelve-foot pole to earn excuse for hearing of sweet music.

Not, mind you, that the twelve-foot pole is other than a most excellent instrument. As the day goes on, and the water clears, it comes into play with effect. Not long will these Kentish streams bear a "spate," and in wandering up the current, what time hill-slopes burn redly in the sunset, and all the valley chequers over with long shadows—my "blue-dun" lands me a handsome prey, single but not unworthy. And so, strolling and throwing, over hedgerow and stile, I reach the inn—red-bricked, stone-mullioned—standing on guard before the ancient bridge. In front, a monstrous chestnut tree, shading a green as bright as grass can be. A weeping ash, trained to roof in a summer-house, at the far end. Beyond, black shadow of trees, making of our Bandusian river a very Acheron. Sparkle of water along one side, with shaven meadows on the far bank. Upon the other side old summer-houses, and the glow of ancient flowers—roses, nasturtiums, marigolds, and such. Under the spreading chestnut tree, a lady seated, with rod idly poised across her knee, reading. At the inn a pleasant landlord, not unskilful in "the craft," sunny neat rooms, and kitchen irreproachable. Heedless of a basket nearly void, I dine in great contentment, and the dusk is settling down as lazily I launch a "cock-a-bondy" on the water. In half-an-hour two victims of greediness join their predecessor. Not empty after all shall I return, Salmasius. But, hark! Does not that patient demoiselle in green uplift her voice? Yea, I recognise broken exclamations, "Oh!" "Sir!" "Oh, he is so big!" I have not passed the young lady without a modest glance. She has eyes that—and hair which—

enfin, a young lady to assist with unusual pleasure, be her troubles what they may. I offer aid; accepted, I fear, without a glance. Any two-legged wretch of the masculine gender would be as welcome. A good fish it is, who bends the rod finely, and splashes and fumes like an angry Triton. But to no purpose. Deep in his horny throat the hook is fixed. The lady in green shows no small skill with the landing net, and in five minutes we have him upon the bank—a pound and a half in weight, pink as salmon, I doubt not, spotted with brown and scarlet, sleek as a fish of Mr. Rolfe's painting, but bright with colours beyond human art. The young lady tells me she has long been trying for him. She often fishes there. I think I shall revisit that lawn.

II.

NOW, if this philosophy which I teach be no sham, if it indeed have power to soothe a mortal grief—now should one invoke it hastily! Dolorous news I bring! Oh, all true fishers about the world, Great Ben is dead! A corpse he lies, not killed in honest fight, gentleman to gentleman, mind matched with muscle, rod against *ruse*, but shot, shot, brother anglers! with common lead and most ordinary powder. A gust of passion thrills me as I hear the news on Horton Bridge. After the manner of Buccleugh, under wrong almost as great, I take the wooden railing in my hand—I "gar" the midges, "spring on hie,"—and with modern emphasis declare that avenged on that murderer I'll be. Poor, poor Big Ben! pride of the silver Darrent, fancy of Farningham, and delight of Dartford! How often

have I watched thee, gently wagging thy speckled tail in the alder's shadow, prone upon thy yellow belly lying! How often hast thou rushed upon my fly, carrying a swell before thee! And how gaily hast thou returned to the well-known shelter, with a yard of line, and a neat assortment of my flies, trailing, helpless, from thy noble snout! Did I ever grudge thee the tackle for which Mr. Jones gives me credit? Nay, verily! For where could it better be bestowed—where shown more honourably for the maker or myself? And it has come to this! "Spoiled by a butcher's hand, behind a ruined wall!" as we have reason to know that Lord Byron would have expressed this matter, had it come within his experience. I grasp my rod like a lance, I prod the wooden railing with its spike, and I long for that butcher before me. "Oh, is my basnet a widow's curch, or my lance a wand of the willow tree, or my arm a lady's lily hand," that a Horton flesher should kill Big Ben before mine eyes? Oh for one hour of bold Buccleugh and the "Lord's Wat," and the rest of them!—Let us go on! This is the nineteenth century, and that butcher has a vote. I myself am a teacher of philosophy, and verily in this case I have need to remember my vocation.

Wandering onwards through the meadow, comfort comes from the small boy who attends me. Even in death Big Ben found honour. They met from all the country side to see that corpse so cruelly mangled, and mournfully each fisher recognised his own peculiar machinery amongst the fringe of hooks around Ben's mouth. For of a truth our friend deceased appeared to feel a pleasure as great in being caught as in catching. Greater, indeed, for we got tired of the sport, but he came up fresh to the last. "He is gone, he is gone, and we cast away moan!" Six

pounds and a half did he weigh ; he sold for 10*s.*, and the numerous company that dined on him declare he was good to the last half ounce!

For a while, be it owned, I spurned consolation. I despaired of a country where such things could be. What, this honest, frolicsome, brave old trout, who so jovially caught the spirit of our fun, lending himself with unwearied glee to every experiment suggested—he to be shot betwixt wind and water, like the foolish and uninteresting partridge! The grief came upon me once again. I put down my rod, surveyed the turquoise sky, the still green fields, the sparkling river, and the sunny trees, looking for the vengeance that should fall upon that butcher. It came not ; but ring by ring on the clear smooth pool, the stir of a hundred fish made ripples. Splash, splash, they leapt and fell again flapping. Reason still warred with sentiment awhile ; then cheerily I took up my rod ; for again it was demonstrated visibly that there are more fish than one in Darrent, and all butchers are not murderers.

Nay, reflecting as I proceed, charitable excuses present themselves for that criminal. I can well believe that Big Ben had jeered and flouted him, with scornful motions of the tail, protruded lip, and wicked leerings of the eye. There are weak brethren among us who cannot bear mocking, especially from a fish who dwells at the bottom of their garden. And so, in a paroxysm of rage, the deed was done, and remorse eternal haunts that butcher. I even hope, with all sincerity, that any questions about a gun licence may be answered without inconvenience.

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It should be an evening of business, this ! On such a warm, still close of a cloudy day our late hero was wont to

challenge us with more than a common glee. When, in late August, the small, yellow dun dances happily aloft, nor crawls in languid sloth upon the reeds, then survey your tackle with extra care, for it may be taxed beyond the common. I stroll along the meadows. At this season of the year, between summer's pride and autumn's mournful glow, all foliage draws nearer to one tone. But ten days since there was a contrast very broad to note amongst ash trees silver-grey, oaks bright of green, dark-shadowed elm, black alder, and willow sheeny; that contrast has vanished. Looking, now, over the landscape, not at a glance could one distinguish either of these trees, were one guided by colour only; but the shape is still unfailing as a token. Do you know that quaint old song—

> Oh, the oak, and the ash, and the bonny ivy tree,
> They flourish at home in my North countree?

If not, get it—air and words. It rings in my head as I go.

How full of scarlet berries are the rowan and the hawthorn! The harvest is nearly all gathered, and stowed in great ricks. At intervals along the hedgerow they rise the little hill and top it, in a fashion strange to midland folks. But there are still sheaves standing across the river, and laggard swains still move amongst them. On this side it is pasture land, and the "lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea"—"to tea," as we used to rhyme it in wicked parody. A crowd of village folk toil after the waggon—working some, some gleaning—a clamorous crew at even, when the day's hard spell is nearly over. Their merriment reaches me across the stream. It is almost passed, the glad harvest time! No fires to-night will gleam between the bushes, reddening all the stream below—bivouac

fires of a wandering army. For, of the harvest men in these parts, many, I learn, are city bred. To such the month's hard toil must have been delight indeed. Fishing here, I have seen them grouped around their fires, boiling the modest tea, and cooking the unpretentious rasher. They sleep in the open air, and is that no charm? Nothing above them but the clear blue sky, the stars, and friendly leaves, the dim mist round, and babbling river at their feet. What a romance for the dweller in "feverish alley, stifling den," such as Alton Locke described, to "lie all night on the open fell." They carry wives away from hence, I'm told, "for love is of the valley," as we know. But the picnic is over and past. A few days hence these poor ones will be thinking of the days that are no more, with sad retrospective glances toward the happy autumn fields.

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This is the weir! The stream pours over in a baby cataract, and explores the depths, and bubbles up again and hurries on. To business, on hands and knees! A throw to clear the line! Eh? There's no mistake! A swirl, a worry; the reel spins out. He must have been lying just beneath the bank. Up and down, round and about, the gallant fellow flurries, trying to gain those stumps beneath the weir. Two pounds good, I take it! Two pounds of painted scales and well-tried muscle! Where does a trout keep his strength? He seems all flesh!—My little netsman wriggles up beside me, plants his instrument softly, and "with many a flirt and flutter" I bring my hero to the verge. Is he in? Gently, gently! Wait! To the middle of the pool he sails again, making a splurge upon the water. Now, now, this time! Fast netted is he; the prettiest little trout that ever rose for fly. But the

struggle has spread alarm. Fish hurry about panic-stricken, as I see by the waves they raise before them. Creep away gently and try below!

Presently it grows dark enough to try the smooth, bright reaches by the mill. I know that time by many signs. The lower sky is all one daffodil; the stars rush out; the lights begin to twinkle from the cots. "The dull day wanes, the slow moon climbs," gigantic loom the cattle. They blow the dew from off the grass in sudden snorts. The night-jar swings from his roosting-place in the polled willow, rasps faintly as he circles round, then twists and tumbles noiseless. On ghost-like wing he glides upon the stream, and poises there so close, so moveless, one would think he had sat down in the water. Bats flitter round, and soar, and come again, chasing those phantom moths that hover on the dewy grass. Big beetles, hatched too late for summer joy, hum out from the sheltering willow. It is time! Wind up now the reel, and track through the misty meadows, where each footprint leaves a trace.

My little netsman chatters as we go, of things of heaven and things of earth, cheerfully inconsequent. Such and such his schoolmaster's opinion of the late comet, such his cursory opinion of like prodigies in former times. I hear also of a cockatoo that made its appearance last Sunday in these fields, and distracted all the populace from their orisons at church. Strange it is that with foreign birds in every house, not one addition has been made to our list of wild fowls since Britain first at Heaven's command rose, &c. Canaries should be thick as blackbirds by this time.—And so we get to Horton Mills, a bonny pool, deep riven as to its midst with surging water. What a grand time a pike would have therein, but never was one seen there

happily. Like the canaries, pikes keep to their own place. So thinking, I cease to regret the mysterious law of nature, which forbids us to have grass-parrots upon our lawn, and cockatoos in our back garden.

Black against the young moon rises the mass of that ancient mill, broken as to its windows, a ghostly ruin. There is a double line of piles across the dam, where the big trout hold their carnival. Shall I tell what happened to me amongst them? All the villagers of Horton would bear witness. He was two feet long, they say. I, on the lofty bank, could see no more than a huge white belly as he came in floating. And shall I publish the name of that wretched boy who "plunged" at the helpless monarch—and was spurned with one last kick which set him free? Nay, I have not held the butcher up to scorn! "With that name I did begin, and with that name thus much shall end!" Sufficient if I have shown what philosophy he needs who would meddle with the angle.

III.

SHE was a grown-up young lady, aged fifteen or thereabouts, who introduced herself to our limited society with these words: "Bother books! They never tell you anything you want to know!" Such an indiscriminate attack on literature was too much for a man who, whatever his faults, has blackened as much paper as any mortal living of his age, weight, and sex. "Wherefore," I asked of the young creature, mildly, "wherefore thus abuse the beneficent invention of Mr. Caxton and others?"

She thrust a paper-covered volume into my hands, with the defiant words, "Well, then, find it yourself if it's there!"

"My child," interposed the stout lady opposite, "I am afraid the gentleman will think you very rude."

"Not at all!" I murmured, surveying the coloured wrapper of the book "bothered"—I say not what was the colour thereof, whether green, or yellow, or pink, being cautious of disposition, and ever mindful of bear-traps. It bore its description on the face, "A Guide to the English Lakes."

"Find it there if you can," repeated this elderly lady of fifteen springs. "There's the railway fares, and the price of dinner, and the heights of the mountains, and selections from Mr. Wordsworth's poetry, and the rates of postage, and——"

"The book seems to contain much useful knowledge," I interrupted; "what is it you cannot find?"

"The theatre!" she answered in a scream. "The places of amusement! The Hall by the Sea! The hotel where they give the balls! The——"

"Ma'am," I interrupted, "people don't think of such meretricious matters at the Lakes!"

"Then, good gracious goodness me!" she cried, "what's a body to do in the evenings?"

Rattling up northwards, in the full glow of holiday freedom, the remarks of this young person appeared to me vulgar, and stupid besides. Know ye not philosophy? Many a time and oft have you climbed up to walls and battlements—no! somebody else treated that subject. I am an old traveller in the district. As fast as each trout season comes round I take my week or fortnight's holiday

there in the spring, and again in the summer, and yet a third time, if it may be managed, in the autumn. I know the country-side well. There are humble comrades of the angle who welcome me, and their friends and relatives in whose fortunes I feel interest. And then again, one's rod is a companion, and the dusky brown old creel one has carried a half-score years. Each bubbling shallow of the burn, each crystally and shaded "dub," has the face of a well-remembered friend. Here first I threw a fly, under laughing instruction of a dear brother departed. There, where diamond-bright water seems brown in its shadowy depth, I slipped and fell headlong in a score of years ago, what time the finest trout of all the stream was plunging on my hook. Yonder and yonder, over half the brooks of Westmoreland, are little spots that hold some memory not uncherished. But these things are my own estate. The casual visitor, such as these holiday companions, has no interest in them. Though the utmost eloquence of human speech were spent upon him, another could not be made to feel how the ripple of some scanty burn, or the wind on a barren fell, bears to me some sweet and tender memory of old days. The harvest of beauty in hill and dale and mere is offered for all men's gathering, but man cannot live on scenery alone, nor even on mountain climbing. Perhaps that young lady was not so far wrong. There is a look upon the brows of ninety-nine persons in the hundred one meets here, especially as evening draws in, which seems to indicate a want unsatisfied. There is a dragging of the feet, caused not by weariness, a tendency to look long at the dullest incident or the weakest picture, a listless tramping to and fro from coffee-room to portico, and six steps up the road and back

and forth again, till welcome nine o'clock is tolled, and a wretch can show some decent plea for dozing off the next twelve hours. This purposeless wandering of mind and limbs I have always seen, in the vast majority of visitors. Philosophy will not entertain the crowd. Nay, it fails even with the elect sometimes.

But at this moment of writing, about four o'clock on a warm afternoon, surely no one can be longing for Halls by the Sea. I do not need a look through the window to assure myself how lovely is the vale of Grasmere at such an hour, on such a day. Voices reach me from the sunny lawn below, which stretches, broken with many a flower-bed and clump of fern, to the lake's edge. Happy fellows down there, who have no more work on their minds this holiday time than the full-fed linnet singing in yon bush! Away with pen and paper! I'll go join the merry idlers!

Well! It has been said a thousand times before, but it needs must be said again and again for all offence of iteration—there is no sight prettier on the earth than this amphitheatre of hills that holds the lake of Grasmere. Do not suppose I use big words without authority. Many cities and lands have I visited on either side of the line, sailing to east or west, and it is with much experience I venture to support the common belief of Westmoreland *chauvins*. There is no prettier scene. On the shore opposite, the hills have their base almost in the lake itself, rising abruptly, billow over billow, to the towering granite crown. The lower swells are overgrown with trees, which dip their lowest branches in the ripples. The higher land above is palely green, its fine, thin turf broken with grey scars, and fallen stones, and protruding layers of rock. And above these barren fields the rude skeleton of the hill

stands manifest and abrupt, his drapery of green thrown off and the stark furrows in his brow unshaded. Down to the right, beneath the quaintly-moulded peak called the Lion and the Lamb, stretches a gaunt ravine, circling behind the foremost crags till lost to sight. Mist ever hangs over its dank throat. Down the midmost hollow, in a long chain of cataracts, Sour Milk Gill foams trembling towards the lake. Farther still to the right, above the little towered church, a gap in the round wall of hills gives passage to the mail road, which cuts through the green fells like a long white ribbon, almost lost against the sky on the topmost rise. Over this scene the sunshine comes and goes. Now shines a granite crest in crystal light and purple shadow, now it looms grey and pale beneath a cloud. A brisk wind stirs the lake. Its sun-tipped wavelets lap against the shore. The boats are jostling and groaning. Birds' song reaches me from every part, where the big ash trees bend above the mere.

But, alas for human nature! these things do not satisfy. Before the porch are dusty ponies pulled up, and a number of young people, just in from Helvellyn, are loudly bemoaning their early return—for it is still three hours to dinner-time. Across the grass a disconsolate couple are playing croquet, but on a lawn so unshaven, and so full of unexpected trips and holes—with balls so cracked and shattered, mallets so chipped—it is not surprising *he* should be supremely bored, and *she* should have lost her little temper. By the water's-edge people are loitering, some on iron seats, some stretched at length in the sun upon a low stone wall. They look at the boats, and languidly make inquiries about the existence and the habits of the native perch. But the occupants of craft returning discourage

enterprise in this direction, and the project half formed falls through. They pull a little, and come back hot and tired after eccentricities of rowing which convince the onlooker that poor Renforth's spirit is not among us here. Heaven help you all, poor fellow-travellers! I'll go to my room again and study.

So there really is something in that second-class young lady's remark about amusements! But if you put it seriously to me—as my good friend the landlord of this hotel might do—how the matter is to be remedied, I will confess that the question could not be answered off-hand. What we want perhaps is a choriphœus, or, more strictly, a choregus, who would pay with his person, for our amusement. Theatres and such things are, of course, absurd, but an occasional dance would be no great trouble to the landlord, whilst vastly inspiriting to his guests. Anything that would draw the very scattered parties dwelling here more closely into relationship and sociability would be a blessing.

The most excellent diversion of the neighbourhood at present is Mr. Close, the poet. The humours of this gentleman must be seen to be believed. He dwelleth by day under a tree at Bowness, like some ancient patriarch—they irreverently jest who say that he climbs Helvellyn to sleep, fancying it the ancient Helicon. His furniture consists of a chair, a table, an umbrella, and a book of his own poems, attentively studied all day long, let us hope with the earnest resolve never to do such a thing again. His stock-in-trade comprises a white hat and the most astounding series of posters that ever was printed. Either side of the way that leads towards Mr. Close's airy den is studded at intervals with these monstrous objects. As the lyre-bird of

Australia entices his future mate by the display of shells, crockery, empty sardine-boxes, chignons, crinolines, Dolly Vardens, Grecian bends, and other objects that fascinate the sex, so does this poet adorn the entrance to his lair with extracts from his immortal works, "Sam's Ghost Story," "The Waddle Family," "Poet Close and his Critics," &c., the whole enlivened with numerous cuts and illustrations from second-hand blocks bought at auction, which, it is needless to say, never bear the slightest relation to the subject illustrated. "Poet Close and his Critics," however, is an exception. This work of art was evidently designed by the injured man himself. There is an easy familiarity with the facts about it, and a pleasing caustic wit that shows personal feeling. The poet is represented in the centre of the picture. In point of likeness, perhaps, the drawing might not be pronounced first-rate, which must be considered the more unfortunate as comparison is invited by the proximity of the original, who lurks just round the corner. But if we regard the representation as showing an ideal which the poet would fain have reached, had he ordered the making of himself, it is impossible to overrate its interest. Considered in this light, we learn that Mr. Close would have wished to tower above the heads of his enemies at a height to which Miss Swann "piled upon" the late Goliah of Gath would have seemed no better than "a wart." He would have worn a Noah's Ark coat, susceptible to the slightest breeze, and trousers several sizes shorter than are usually worn. His hair would have been some feet in length, and his face resembled a kitchen grate. Such an aspect had the gifted man worn if he had designed his own construction and his own apparel. Around his knees in this valuable picture surge a number of "petty men," representing the

principal newspapers and periodicals of the day, together with certain political characters, named, and a few ideal malignants, such as "Sawney M'Grab, M.P." Nothing more mean and disgusting than the appearance of these persons—unless it be their conduct! Mr. *Punch* and the *Times* lead on the pack, who are engaged in a cowardly assault upon the abbreviated trousers. This work of art refers to the withdrawal of the poet's pension some years ago, after £100 a-year had been granted to him by the late Lord Palmerston. It has been endeavoured to persuade Mr. Close that his vengeance on the poor critics is carried almost too far. When Aristophanes held up to ridicule a man almost greater, as some think, than Mr. Close himself, the injured philosopher only laughed. But Socrates was not a poet, is the man's unanswerable reply, nor did the playwright's satire deprive him of a hundred drachmas per annum. Nothing will convince this man he does not right to be angry, and, therefore, "Close's Bower," as we call it, still remains what it has been any time these five years, and we of the literary profession tear our hair with spite in viewing its ornate arcades.

IV.

HISTORY or tradition have preserved to our grateful remembrance the names of most of those to whom we are indebted for geographical discoveries. Hippalus, the Egyptian, who first blundered on the Madras coast, is commemorated in every abridgment of Oriental history. Hanno receives quite as much credit as is due to the earliest seaman that took fright at the wonders of the

Mare Sargossa. Sawira Gading, who miraculously discovered Java, has his praises sung in epics twenty thousand lines in length over all the Eastern seas. There is Christopher Columbus also, and Nuñez de Balboa, who did not disdain the shelter of a butter-tub in his eagerness to discover the southern sea. All these have had towns, or poems, or big books, at least, devoted to their names. Vasco de Gama, the Portuguese captain that doubled the Cape of Good Hope, receives honour on every hand, except from the followers of Mr. Grote, who will persist in accrediting those pestilent Phœnicians of Pharaoh Necho's time. These are but instances and names taken from the long roll of heroes who enjoy the credit of their deserts. With a little patience on both sides—but especially on the reader's—I could run you off a column of this sort of thing. But the point of it—the sad moral I would draw after reciting a score or two of cases—lies in the question, Who discovered our English lakes? The feat was done and accomplished, mind you, before the art of discovering places and things had become a commonplace profession. Anybody, says the old French proverb, can play Punch who has been told the secret. But this unknown great man did it by himself, alone, having no forerunner in the trade. It was not of his age nor character to invoke the heavenly powers in person, as that speculator did in Gustave Droz's charming tale, "Autour d'une Source." "Old inhabitants" of this neighbourhood scoff at the vulgar error of some people who would give the glory of the deed to Mr. Wordsworth. "Folks came here before he was born or thought of!" they tell you contemptuously; and I confess to a feeling of satisfaction with which Byron would have sympathised in hearing that I owe no gratitude for

present pleasure to that most admirable, most intolerable, most blank-versified of bores. But for the glorious benefactor whose name no one knows, whose memory has slipped from us, whose tomb probably bears no record of his noble deeds, my heart beats with enthusiasm.

What is the land revealed by his exertions to posterity? For that sort of information I can only refer you to the guide-books. The language of complimentary description is exhausted therein. The writers have piled it up very particularly high. An innocent tourist who should hang his faith on their flowery tongues might reasonably expect to find the real Pelion heaped on Ossa in Helvellyn, Niagara outdone by Sour Milk Gill Force, and the vegetation of the Amazons put to shame by our modest Skiddaw. I am content to say that from this window by which I write I look up to a broken line of hills, whereof it is my proudest boast to know not one single name. They are neither stupendous nor awful, but rugged enough to be picturesque, whilst not too inhospitable to the climber. Some of them, indeed, present a crown so bare, and bold, and rocky, so wind and water worn, so cut and furrowed with wintry torrents, that to tackle them in the face would be beyond the powers of an Alpine Club champion. But there is always provided by these kindly hills a quiet corner round which one may slip, a ragged and narrowing ribbon of turf to hold the cautious step. Others of them, lower in range, bear a crest of waving wood, pine, and beech, and silver birch, and their sides are mantled with soft foliage. To-day a blue-grey loom of heat magnifies both distance and proportions. Stretching towards me from their feet are sunny fields, broken with trees, flecked with grazing cattle. In the mid-distance yet close by—for

all our scenery is miniature—sparkles the pretty lake, its wavelets tipped with sunshine. Behind my little dwelling are other hills. Their granite foundations leave scarcely space for opening a door, so close they rise from the house-wall. Down away to the right yonder is an ancient church, so thick of wall, so buttressed, and with doors so curiously clumped with antique iron, it would seem prepared to bear the attacks of men as well as weather. Beneath the shadow of its venerable yews the clamorous brook turns suddenly its course, and flows by, deep and almost silent. At the churchyard gate hundreds of vehicles pause daily, for in that quiet turf behind are graves which people journey far to see—those of William Wordsworth and Hartley Coleridge. They show you the pretty dwelling of the former, a mile or two on the road to Ambleside, overlooking Rydal Water; and on copper plates, nailed to its trees, you may read how the successful poet passed through such and such a happy deliverance of verse at such a spot. But I should take it that most travellers who know what it is they see, look with a better and deeper interest at that poor, plain cottage hard by, where Hartley Coleridge lived, and worked, and died.

Tourists regard the simple graves in Grasmere Churchyard with an appearance of vast interest. They don't say much commonly, but then the guide-books have already printed all the remarks absolutely needful, and most of those that are suitable. When the graves are "done," they lounge on the low stone parapet, and watch the brown trout nimbly snapping at the summer flies. Haply there is a fisherman below, dropping his treacherous hooks among the ripple; and sometimes, but rarely, lucky idlers may behold the struggles and the end of such a bonny fish

as the "church dub" only can produce in all the neighbourhood.

These little lakes of ours are indeed somewhat cockney if the truth be told. As Margate is the makeshift with which thousands of happy, common folks content themselves in default of Biarritz or Trouville, so are the hills and tarns of Westmoreland a substitute for Swiss mountains and lakes. They are good in themselves, charmingly pretty; they are thought, in a confused way, to be cheap, and they are the fashion amongst a large portion of the middle class. Of that order are our visitors. Dukes and duchesses, or at least beings of noble blood, no doubt could be found among us, but they are retiring of disposition, and extravagant in the matter of private sitting-rooms. We of the table d'hôte don't go in for that sort of thing. We like to see as much and as many as we can during our "out," whether places or people. There is an impression abroad that it is knowing to dine at the "ordinary." It is very well established that acquaintances, whose value, social and commercial, can only be pronounced enormous, have repeatedly been made at such-like gatherings by parties not a bit inferior to ourselves. And then the *placens uxor* is fond of the ordinary; she there displays her cap to the admiration of more strange ladies at once than she is ever likely to have the chance of startling at home. This is an important point. If there be anything in which our ordinary shines, it is in the matter of caps. They are to be observed of all colours, shapes, and sizes, but mostly run to mauve and lappets.

Circumstances don't allow us even to flirt with comfort, "at the Lakes." There are two reasons:—first, the astounding proportion of ancient ladies everywhere, too old

to flirt themselves, and too decorous to allow others; secondly, the fact that every one is always on the move. The blessing of rest is utterly uncomprehended of our voyagers. They set out to do a round of scenery, and it must and shall be done with businesslike method and despatch. Every morning the guide-book is produced, the neighbourhood mapped out for inspection, and each poor pretty spot duly scrutinised in order. I verily believe these mountains and trees shrink from the ordeal. The noble sadness in their air, which you must have noticed, I thus account for. Like lovely slave girls put up for market, they cower at sight of every passer-by, so bitterly used are they to fatuous admiration and wearying desire. The reckless stream hurries past merrily, having no experience to sadden nor future to dread. But deeply I pity those shame-struck hills and murmuring woods, destined each day to be explored and ransacked by parties in search of the "picturesque," a quality they know not when they see most likely, a word more barbarous than ever drove ancient purist mad. But you will easily perceive that when people are thus afflicted with the burden of unrest there can be little leisure for making acquaintances. Lorenzo might seem just the "ideal man" to Lucretia's maiden fancy could she but catch a glimpse of him. They are lodging in the same hotel. She dwelleth, it may be, in number 19, and he in number 20. The fates, which fain would link their lives together, have brought them so near. No more is needed than an interview, a glance, a picnic, a blush, and a reference to papa. But how can the designs of Fate be carried out if Lorenzo *must* ascend a mountain every day, and Lucretia *must* sketch a waterfall in the opposite direction? 'Tis true there is the ordinary, but before the ladies

have satisfactorily fitted their caps, the mountain climber finds himself as sleepy as a dog, and the fair painter is bored beyond endurance. There is no glamour for eyes wearied. Everything is seen at its worst, and everybody. Next morning the gentle instincts of youth might have play again; but Lorenzo, alas! was off with the dawn on a visit to that waterfall, and Lucretia, mounted on a pony, is tracing all unconsciously the yesterday's footsteps of Lorenzo. But three days had Fate given the pair, and thus they are wasted. On the fourth, the hero of this romance, without beginning, end, or middle, is over the hills towards Keswick, whilst the heroine packs up her sketching materials for Ambleside.

North countrymen I hold to be the very backbone of our tight little island; but so large has been the immigration to these parts of late, that one half the people, even of the poorest class, are southerners, and behave as such. Your real Oatcake, however, is easily distinguished from them, independently of his accent. He invariably believes the southerner to be neither more nor less than a fool, various in degrees of folly, no doubt, but never rising above the level which in the north country is called "soft" or "half-baked." According to the individual disposition of the native he may visit this misfortune of the foreigner with stern and grim reprobation, or he may humour it with good-natured contempt. In the former case he will glare at him, and offer advice in the harshest and most unfeeling tones; in the other, he will frankly laugh in his face, quite unconscious of offence, and, put forth his suggestions after the manner of a nursemaid to a child. In any event he will offer advice and elementary assistance, if the southerner can possibly be sus-

pected to be doing anything. Should you be fishing, or sketching, or gathering ferns, or even looking at a view, the true north countryman who may chance upon you does not fail to aid your ignorant artlessness. He first stands and takes careful stock of your personal appearance, wearing either the meditative frown of disapprobation, or the broad grin of friendly scorn. This review completed, still all in silence, he will survey your labours, the manner and fruits of them. Then he will address you as "Mon," and expose your incapacity in the rudiments of your occupation, whatever it be. Oh, the fun there is in these sturdy north countrymen! At every age they are the same of character. Youth does not discompose, nor age tame their pride of self. I went into a cottage the other day. Opening the back-yard door, I came suddenly on two tiny boys, white-haired, blue-eyed, hard-featured, though scarce four years old. Children of the south would have been timid, if not frightened, by the abrupt intrusion of a stranger; not so these young scions of the Vikings. Sturdily rising from the pavement, they stood bolt upright on their tiny legs, and looked me in the face. Then, without moving a step, they broke into a guffaw, the very echo of that easy contempt their fathers feel for us. I looked at the little men, and their wide-mouthed scorn so tickled me I guffawed louder than they, and so we stood opposite to each other for five minutes by the dial, laughing to kill ourselves. The dame found us before our joke was laughed out, and she remarked calmly: "Ah! Real young statesmen them!"

But real young statesmen have been lately brought within the dulling influence of lowland legislation. George Mackrathe—whom you know if you know Grasmere—

tells me that to tickle trout is now an offence by statute. I should say that no man living is less likely to mislead you than Mackrathe. If one ought, for the sake of philosophy, to admit a fault in every friend, this excellent fellow might be called a little too accurate. The sturdiest guide and the stanchest fisherman of a district where every male is fisherman or "dafty," he prides himself upon composure under every circumstance. You can't surprise Mackrathe; he has seen such wonders of science in angling, and such miracles of innocence, that if you proposed to fish for trout at Christmas with a strawberry he would gravely prepare, and ask if you had bait enough. But his opinion, when demanded, he will give with consummate knowledge and experience; indeed, if you get him to talk freely, he can cite cases which explain a certain tolerance of heterodoxy. In the exercise of his profession he finds many foreign clients. Marvellous arts he has seen, not always unsuccessful, for taking fish. Ask that story of the American who took him out to fly-fish for pike. Yes, and brought home a basket, caught with the strangest insect that ever dropped on Grasmere lake. All the same, admitting every justification, I like a man who can be surprised.

I have been long absent from Britain, and Mackrathe is my authority for many new beliefs. He tells me that our Legislature has forbidden the tickling of trout. Is it possible? What manner of men do they expect to raise in the lonely northern fells under their new enactments? Not men like their fathers, surely! Education is a good thing, and I wish I had imbibed more of it; but manly spirit, and strong nerve, and the recollection of a happy childhood are better. If brave officers are bred in playing-

fields of Harrow, the brave men they lead have been trained in the free old English life—nesting, fishing, poaching perhaps, truant-playing, and seeking boyish adventure in the green hanging woods of the hill-side, or along the brawling stream.

I think I had as much of glorious freedom as most boys; I'm sure I enjoyed life as much. But the sweetest, most delightsome memories I have are of long midsummer afternoons, paddling in the brook and catching trout. Few people, mark you, even when they grow old, but love to walk beside running water. I know I could still paint every bit of the stream that ran beneath the house where I was born—each willow leaning over it, each meadow that sloped gently towards it, each shady alder-bush that blocked the narrows. And for no other scene would I take up the brush so long discarded. Who fishes that brook now?—or does the law forbid to every boy the sport so keen to us twenty years ago? Many miles away was I when that bad Act passed, or with the utmost skill and energy this pen can use I would have fought against a law so selfish. The memory of my own boyhood would have stirred me to protest. Amongst us there is evidently a whole class of folks, epicene by nature, and hysterical of temperament, whose aims are directed to crushing the English boy. They would sugarplum and repress him, excite his nerves and tie him up, till he become moulded to the likeness—the most unwholesome likeness—of a French *moutard*. These people have a shrinking dislike of strength. Accustomed, themselves, to a pill at bed-time and a draught in the morning, health in others is obnoxious. I don't say that they consciously entertain such uncharitable feelings—very much shocked they would be

at the suspicion, for they're nothing if not goody. But I mean that the tendency of the law which they direct is towards the lowering of our English constitution. The Philistines be upon thee, my countryman!—with paltry green withes and brand-new ropes, which, if they will not hold will gall and chafe. Beware lest the pressure of custom be added, under flatulent advice of a dyspeptic press. What knows the pallid scribbler of our golden joys? Being what they are, Englishmen have mastered the world; and foreigners, being what they are, have——not. Why change the type?—for assuredly a change there will be when those English boys grow up who have never dared to birds'-nest, nor to tickle, nor to see two bantams fight it out, nor to fight themselves, to throw a stone, or bear an honest flogging. I am glad of my years to-day, for verily we of that age had a happier boyhood than our sons will taste.

FINIS.

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